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THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME



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by A. W. KAPPER

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**THE
NAMELESS
MUMMY**

by ARLTON EADIE

•
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**THE DEVIL'S
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by SEABURY QUINN

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THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

Volume 5

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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The Editor's Page

In the February 1969 issue of *FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION* Judith Merrill discusses John Brunner's novel, *Stand on Zanzibar*; I cannot do so, since I did not receive a review copy from Doubleday. However, Miss Merrill asks two questions at the end of her very interesting discussion which range in application far beyond any one story.

The questions are (1) Is it possible for a writer in one culture fully and adequately to project the mores and emotional responses of realistic human beings in a (realistically) different environment? (2) Is it possible to spread out this much detail about a world conceived to the author's mind (and—invariably—dedicated to the proposition that his own logic is supreme) without getting to sound a bit pompous and pretentious? In the second question "this much detail" refers specifically to the Brunner novel, which is supposed to be a quarter of a million words long; I shall use the question in relation merely to a story of considerable length.

Let's consider the words "realistic" and "adequately" in the first question. You might say that there is no problem here, because "realistic" simply means a presentation that conforms to the actualities of the environment in which a story is laid, and to the actual way in which people living in this environment express

themselves. Language, customs, ideals, prejudices, effects of climatic conditions, effects of both natural and man-made resources available to the inhabitants, etc.—all these make up the picture; and when any author tries to write about an environment different from his own (what, to him, is a foreign culture), all these must be taken into account. And if his story is placed in the past, beyond his conscious memory of living experiences he has had, then he is dealing with a "foreign culture" here, too; of course, if it is the past of his own country he is dealing with, then the culture generally will not be quite so foreign to him as that of another land.

This sounds as though a great deal of hard work has to be done—and it does—but that the problem itself is essentially a simple one.

* I submit that it is not, because we have not finished with the examination of the meaning of the word, "realistic". There is one further element, and a crucial one: *very few of us live in a realistic relationship to the actualities of our environment.*

We do not see actuality as it "actually is"; we see our own individual interpretation of it—and this cannot be but some distance removed from the actualities. If the correlation is close enough, then we manage to get along, one way or another; beyond a certain area of "false to actuality" interpretation, we cannot

cope, and the only thing that can be done for us is to be placed in the protective custody of some sort of institution for the utterly bewildered.

But there are wide areas of difference and disagreement among that "most of us" who manage to get along one way or another. That, for one thing, is why we need lawyers; it is also why we have such peaceful activities as running restaurants with sizeable menus, or such unpeaceful activities as strikes, riots, wars, etc.

As an illustration of the point I'm approaching, I am going to telescope a number of actual experiences into a single fictional example—something that writers are constantly doing in fiction, consciously or otherwise.

I was at an amateur production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and since I've had some eleven years of experience with amateur theatricals, on stage, backstage, and in front either directing or assisting a director, I was no less fascinated by what was going on in the audience than what was going on on the stage. Not far from where I was sitting were a couple of acquaintances, a doctor and a musician, as well as the doctor's 12-year old niece. When the sleepwalking scene in Act Five came on, she was on the edge of her seat all through it; and while her interest didn't wander away later, I could see that was the scene that really hit her.

Downstairs after the show I caught her telling her uncle and friend excitedly how wonderful it was—how real the woman playing Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep was. She danced away finally and an enig-

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matic smile came to the doctor's face, which the musician didn't see as he said, "Well, you know I agree with her; I thought that was wonderfully realistic."

The doctor grinned at him. "I wouldn't do it to Joanie, but you can take it, Maurice. That scene was anything but realistic. I've had enough dealing with sleepwalkers at the sanitarium."

At this point they noticed me listening and waved me over. And my contribution to the discussion was a suggestion that if the bit had been authentic, it might not have been nearly so dramatic. The doctor agreed with that. "But the music sounded pretty authentic to me. Was it, Maurice?"

The musician shook his head. "Effective and good, but nothing like 12th century Scottish, or even real Elizabethan for that matter. Nothing lost. People imagine that this is what it must sound like because it's sort of modal—and the real thing might be disappointing."

They both agreed that the cast had done a wonderful job. Not a slip in the whole show, although I managed to get it out of them—without too obvious prying. I hope—that either one had read *Macbeth* in many a year. I'm a real stinker; I took care to read every line before the show—in the edition that was being used, with the cuts indicated.

So when, later, I went to congratulate the director, the first thing I said to him was "Damn fine cast, Paul—no one broke up during the sleepwalking act."

Because, you see, the Doctor had forgotten a sentence which is the cue for Lady Macbeth to start her "Out,

damned spot!" speech; he did the business he was supposed to do—take out a tablet and stylus, but left her hanging, waiting for her actual cue to start (she was not facing him and couldn't see what he was doing). She paused just long enough to allow him to speak, then proceeded, instead of allowing a stage wait. By this time, the Doctor possibly may have remembered himself, but he let thing go along. And there were a couple of other slips, in each case something that those on stage, and perhaps sometimes the culprit, recognized; but at no time did anyone show sign of distress that was out of character for the character being played, or lose the pace. No one broke up.

For Joanie, Maurice, and most of the audience the sleepwalking act was realistic.

For the Doctor, and most of the audience, the music sounded authentic.

For many, probably most of the audience, the cast made no errors.

Which leads me to the point: "realism" is not a quality in the object; it is an effect in the reader, or hearer, or viewer, etc.

Or, as I. A. Richards indicates (using beauty as an example), A causes the effect in me of experiencing beauty. So we can diagram this as: A causes Eb. Not: A contains B (Beauty).

Or, with the performance of *Macbeth*, which most viewers considered realistic:

A causes Er.

But we saw that Realism wasn't there, after all.

And when we speak of "realistic" human beings in a "realistically" different environment we are speaking of a work which produces this effect in you or me or someone else.

Now let's rephrase Miss Merrill's question. You see, it could not be answered at all in its original form, simply because it assumed something which does not exist—namely that "Realism" is a quality which can be said either to be in a story, to a greater or larger extent or not to be in a story, to a greater or larger extent. This is a chimera.

Rephrased question (1) is it possible for a writer in one culture fully and adequately to project the mores and emotional responses of human beings in a different environment so that both the characters and the environment will produce an effect of being "realistic" to all readers?

You can see that a great deal depends upon the particular reader's ignorance, of actual environments, actual mores, and actual kinds of human responses. Up to a point, ignorance will aid his enjoyment and enhance his ability to get the effect of "realism"; beyond that point, ignorance may prevent him from getting any effect save boredom or bewilderment. Knowledge may or may not be helpful.

So my answer to the rephrased question is: maybe not an absolute impossibility, but highly improbable.

And I trust that you see, now, why it isn't necessary to consider the second question at all. RAWL.

The Nameless Mummy

by Arlton Eadie

ARLTON EADIE, who died in 1935, was an exclusive with *WEIRD TALES*; indices do not show him appearing in any of the other weird or science fiction titles, even posthumously. He had a total of 25 stories in WT, starting with *Flames of Destiny*, in the March 1928 issue; *The Phantom Island*, May 1939 issue, was the last story to be published. WT ran two serials by him, *The Trail of the Cloven Hoof* (weird mystery with a science fiction tinge) in seven parts, July 1934 through January 1935, and *The Carnival of Death*, also weird mystery but all explained "naturally" in the end, in four parts, September through December 1935. From the comments in *The Eerie*, WT's letter department, we see that Eadie was very popular with the readers, although your editor finds him uneven in quality; but the good stories are worth returning to, now and then.

IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT it was still within the hours of public admission, the lofty galleries of the Helmstone Museum were, save for an occasional uniformed attendant, absolutely deserted; and Peter Venn, the curator, rejoiced accordingly. Usually he was only

too pleased to show visitors round the large and well-stocked museum over which he had charge, waxing especially eloquent over the treasures of the Egyptian section, in which it was particularly rich, but today he had work on hand which would monopolize his attention for many hours. By the bequest of a recently deceased collector, the museum had come into possession of a great number of Egyptian antiquities, and it was to the examination and classification of these that his labors were being directed.

The room in which he worked was situated at the extreme end of the Egyptian Gallery, being separated from it by a partition, the upper part of which was glass. By simply raising his head he could obtain an uninterrupted view of the long vista of decorated mummy-cases, carved sphinxes, and monuments which went to make up the more bulky contents, and it was owing to this fact that it was not thought necessary to have an attendant stationed in that particular room.

The task before Peter Venn was no light one. The objects with which his little room was crowded seemed to have been garnered promiscuously by their late owner and to have lain neglected for many years. One of the great mummy-cases had not even been opened, and it was only natural that this should first engage Peter Venn's attention. The study of Egyptology is notoriously full of surprises, and every unexamined relic of that long-dead civilization may hold a secret that will startle the world.

It must be admitted that the appearance of the casket was such as to arouse his curiosity. It was of unpainted cedarwood, its sole ornamentation a figure of the Goddess Nout carved on the lid in an attitude as though she were shielding the body within with her protecting wings. But what puzzled Peter Venn most was the small bronze tablet fixed to the lid. This had been covered with a thick coating of bitumen, apparently with the object of concealing the identity of the mummy which lay within, and it was only after having expended two hours in removing this that he was able to see the inscription it bore. This, greatly to his amazement, proved to be written in Latin.

"*Regna, honores, divi Hæc, caduca et incerta sunt,*" he was able to read at last, and as he uttered the words he felt a thrill of exultation tingling his veins. "He must have been an important, if not a royal, personage to have such an epitaph inscribed on his coffin," he muttered to himself. "There would be no point in writing of a poor and obscure man that 'Kingdoms, honors, riches, are frail and fickle things.' He was evidently a Roman — maybe one of the higher officers of the legions that Julius Caesar sent to Egypt. Or perhaps it is even —"

Whilst he had been speculating on the identity of the body which lay within, Peter Venn had taken up his chisel and inserted it beneath the lid. His hand was already on the handle to lever the coffin open, when suddenly he paused, overcome with a strange feeling of helplessness that he could neither define or explain.

Peter was not so imaginative man, neither was he a novice to his profession. Years of constant association had blunted that feeling of involuntary awe with which the average person would regard the exposure of a body in its two-thousand-year-old resting-place; to him a mummy was just an interesting antiquity, to be examined, classified and ticketed before being placed in its glass case. But now, to his surprise and annoyance, he found himself suddenly overcome with a feeling very much like physical terror. And yet, strangely enough, the actual reason for his fear did not appear to be the mummy-case itself; it needed something more potent, more vital, more human to account for the sensation which possessed him. Slowly, unconsciously, as though actuated by a compelling volition alien to himself, Peter straightened up and looked through the glass partition, and a slight gasp came from between his parted lips as his eyes fell upon the figure of the woman who stood outside.

She was rather under medium height, slim and dark-haired, with small, delicately chiselled features and long, slightly almond-shaped eyes. Her dress was ordinary enough; a tailored costume of amber-colored cloth with a small, close-fitting hat to match; but that was the last detail of her appearance that Peter noticed. All his interest was centered on her face, and particularly her eyes, which drew his own and held them with a compelling, hypnotic force.

Peter Venn was forty and a bachelor, and up to then women had played but a small part in his life. But now, as he looked into the eyes of this strange woman he seemed to see reflected in those almond-shaped pools of darkness a vision of his youthful hopes and dreams; once more he was filled with vague, romantic longings which he had thought he had long since outgrown. A slight flush crept into his pale cheeks and his eyes began to shine behind their double-glasses. Almost without thinking what he did, Peter Venn opened the door of the partition.

"Good afternoon." Even as he uttered it, the commonplace greeting sounded utterly banal, but it was the only opening he could think of. "If you are interested in Egyptian antiquities I shall be most happy to show you round."

A slight smile hovered round the full, rich lips as she glanced at the long rows of glass cases.

"I am certainly interested, as you say," she answered in a full, musical voice, "but whether the information you are able to impart will be anything new is another matter."

In spite of the smile which accompanied her words, their implied contempt for his knowledge caused a frown to gather on his forehead.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon." His tone was slightly sarcastic. "I was not aware that I was addressing one well versed in ancient lore. Perhaps it is I who should be the listener and you the expounder of the meaning of the relics around us?"

Her slender shoulders lifted in a tiny shrug.

"Perhaps," she agreed, with such composure that Venn felt as though he were being laughed at. His reputation as an Egyptologist was no small one, and it was intolerable to think this slip of a girl should set her knowledge on an equal with his. There was a somewhat grim smile on his lips as he drew the sun-blind off one of the center cases and pointed to a roll of papyrus which lay spread out beneath.

"This is written in the hieratic characters of the Thirteenth Dynasty," he explained gravely. "I should be very grateful for a little assistance in translating it."

He paused, waiting for the look of confusion to expose the shallowness of her boasted learning. To his unbounded amazement, however, the girl stepped up to the case, and, with a mere casual glance at the queer-looking writing, at once began to translate:

"This is the record of Manenka-Ra, High Priest of Horus, son of Isis, He who presents the souls of the departed to Osiris, after Thoth, having weighed their hearts in the balance and found if they be righteous and true—"

She broke off and looked up with a little smile. "Need I read further? This is so elementary, you know."

For a full minute Peter Venn remained staring at her. Who was this entrancing young lady who so glibly ran off the complicated script that had taken him, professor though he was, months to decipher?

"Who are you?" he asked curiously. "And how is it that one so young as you is able to read a language that requires many years of study even to grasp the rudiments?"

Again her shoulders lifted in that enigmatical shrug. "What does it signify where I gained my knowledge? The only fact that matters is that I do possess knowledge so deep and far-reaching that your mind can not do more than enter on the outermost fringe of its boundless, unexplored territory."

Venn looked puzzled, as well he might. "I'm afraid I do not understand," he murmured.

Again that little shrug that he was beginning to know so well. "Naturally." The air of complacency with which she assumed her superiority almost took his breath away. "Some time—soon, perhaps—you shall know who and what I am. In the meantime I should be very glad to see those objects which have recently been bequeathed to your museum."

Venn's forehead creased in perplexity. Here was another mystery. Scarcely anybody outside the staff had been informed of the bequest, yet here was a complete stranger apparently in possession of the full details. But he seemed to recognize the futility of seeking an explanation. After all, it was only another extraordinary circumstance connected with this most extraordinary young lady. He shrugged and pointed toward his room behind the glass partition.

"You are quite a liberty to examine them," he told her. "They are in there, and—"

He broke off short and started forward with outstretched arms. For no sooner had she reached the threshold of the room which contained the unnamed mummy than she uttered a low, strangled cry and staggered back, limp and nerveless. Half leading, half carrying, he got her to the nearest chair and prepared to go in search of a glass of water. But she stopped him with a sudden gesture.

"It is nothing," she said, though her trembling lips and ashy features belied her words. "A sudden faintness, that is all. I shall be better—soon."

He looked from her to the unopened mummy-case. Deep down in his mind a suspicion was beginning to form that the coming of this strange girl was intimately connected with the mummy that he was on the point of exposing. Moreover, he could have sworn that it was the sight of the case which had called forth the display of emotion he had just witnessed.

"It seems as if this mummy-case is not entirely unknown to you," he said slowly.

She inclined her dark head with a gesture of assent.

"I have seen it . . . once . . . many years ago," she answered hesitatingly. "And . . . that is the reason of my presence here."

"I knew it!" cried Peter Venn triumphantly.

With a quick movement that somehow reminded him of the sinuous glide of a panther, the girl rose to her feet and came toward him. Beautiful though her face was, there was now a look on it that filled him with

vague alarm. The red lips were set and determined; the eyes held in their starry depths the blaze of an indomitable will. She glided so close to him that he could feel her warm breath fanning his cheek.

"You will open that mummy-case tonight, after the museum is closed," she said, speaking in low, hurried tones. "I will be present, and after we have seen — what we shall see — I will tell you such a story as human ears have never listened to before."

Peter Venn drew back, aghast. "What you ask is impossible!" he cried. "My position — my reputation —"

She raised her dark eyes to his, and once again he was conscious of the same mental numbness that had preceded her first coming. It seemed as though her will was fighting for ascendancy with his own — fighting and slowly but surely winning.

"At ten o'clock tonight."

The words were a command rather than a question. Hidden fires seemed to glow in her eyes as she uttered them. Peter Venn threw out his hands with the gesture of one who leaves the future in the hands of fate. "Very well — at ten," he said hoarsely.

A moment later he was alone.

During the ensuing hours Peter Venn did nothing but consider his extraordinary interview with the strange girl, and the more he considered it the uglier the whole business seemed. That he, a responsible and respectable official, having in his charge objects whose value was literally beyond all price, had consented to admit an utter stranger to the museum at the dead of night seemed almost beyond belief. Yet he undoubtedly had consented. Why? He asked himself the question a thousand times as he made his way through the darkened streets to his bachelor home; it dinned itself in his ears as he sat over his solitary supper; the very ticking of the tall grandfather clock seemed to reiterate the maddening query as it recorded the passing of the sounds which brought him nearer the appointed time. Why? . . . why? . . . why?

Although she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen, he was not, he told himself angrily, in love with her; fascinated, dominated, maybe, but no more in love with her than the fluttering bird is in love with the serpent whose glittering eyes lure it to its destruction. Oh, why had he not asserted himself, told her that the thing she asked was impossible to grant, and firmly but gently dismissed her? Yes, that was what he must do. He would keep the appointment, but only to tell her that he had changed his mind and any request to view the new exhibits must be made through the directors of the museum.

And yet—

Peter Venn found his newly formed resolution wavering as he remembered those compelling yet adorable eyes. After all, what was it that she asked of him? Merely that she should be present when he examined the strange mummy. Surely there would be no great harm in humoring her whim, or curiosity, or superstition, or whatever was at the back of her unusual desire. And, to confess the truth, he himself was conscious of no small curiosity to see the outcome of the affair.

Who was this amazingly persuasive young lady who was able to read the hieratic script of two thousand years ago as readily as he could read the evening paper? Was she aware of the contents of that Roman-Egyptian mummy-case? Was she—?

The mellow chimes of the clock announcing half-past nine brought his speculations to an abrupt close. Rising hastily, he hurried on his hat and coat and, telling his housekeeper that he had an engagement that would probably keep him very late indeed, issued forth to keep his tryst.

It was just on the hour when Peter Venn turned into the street in which the private door of the museum was situated, only to find it lying silent and deserted. The fair unknown had not kept the appointment—he had been fooled!

He was surprised at the mingled emotions which this discovery called forth in his mind. He should, he told himself, have felt relieved at the respite, and possibly a little angry at the trick which had been played on him. But actually these feelings were swamped by the pang of acute disappointment that shot through his heart at the sight of the empty street. He paused irresolutely; then, with a shrug and a sigh, he turned to go.

Without warning, as though it had suddenly materialized out of the shadows, a hand touched his arm, and a voice, clear, musical, but intensely low, spoke to him

"Did you think that I should fail to come, my friend?" A slight smile rose to the girl's lips as she noted the amazement depicted on his face as he swung round. "I have been hiding in the shadows, awaiting your arrival. Our task has risks enough without adding to them by courting the observation of chance passers-by. But time presses. We must do what we came to do before the watchman makes his rounds at midnight."

Peter paused in the act of inserting his pass-key in the door. "How do

you know of that?" he asked, but she gave an impatient shake of her head.

"What matter how I know? Proceed, my Peter, and cease to puzzle over trifles. There will be other, far deeper, mysteries to occupy your thoughts before morning."

So sinister was the tone in which she uttered the words that Peter Venn found his early suspicions returning with redoubled force. "Indeed?" he began. "In that case—"

"Be silent—and open that door!"

Such was the imperious command of that quick sibilant order that Venn, actuated by an impulse which overruled both caution and fear, inserted the key and opened the door.

It was not the first occasion on which Peter Venn had been in the museum at night. An ardent delver into the lore of the past, he had often remained poring over some fragile roll of papyrus or musty black-leather tome until the early hours of the morning; but never had those shadowy halls and galleries seemed so full of eerie mystery as they did that night. The faint echoes, which their stealthy footsteps sent floating along the silent corridors, sounded like ghostly whisperings; the beam of the electric pocket-lamp which the girl had switched on sent uncouth, grotesque shadows dancing on the walls; heavy odors, sickly sweet yet death-like, hung about the hall where the still, linen-swathed mummies lay in their last long sleep. It was with a feeling of positive relief that he at last entered his private room and knew that the time for action had arrived.

Pausing only to remove his hat and overcoat, Peter Venn immediately set to work to prize up the coffin-lid of the unnamed mummy. But the task was long and tedious; for, eager and excited though he undoubtedly was, he did not neglect the precautions which long years of handling frail and precious objects had ingrained in him. Cloth pads had to be placed beneath the fulcrum of the tool which he was using as a lever, in order to prevent the metal splintering the aged wood; numerous wedges had to be inserted into the gradually widening space to prevent the heavy lid slipping back as soon as he withdrew the point of the tool. But at last the lid was clear of numerous tongues of wood that had held it in position, and, exerting all his strength, he lifted it off and placed it out of the way in a corner of the room.

Inside the coffin, filling it to within a few inches of the top, was a quantity of withered flowers, amongst which the lotus could still be recognized, and these completely hid the body from view. But as soon as he had swept aside the first layer he caught the gleam of yellow metal

among the withered petals. His heart gave a sudden bound at the sight. Only one metal could have retained its luster undimmed through the ages which had elapsed since the casket was sealed, and that was gold. Had he stumbled on a treasure unawares?

A cloud of fine dust rose from the shrivelled leaves and blossoms as he scooped them up with trembling hands and tumbled them on the floor. Coughing, half blinded, consumed with that frantic excitement which the true antiquarian feels when on the brink of a unique discovery, Peter Venn worked on until the body was completely revealed. Hitherto he had worked by the light of the little electric pocket-lamp; but now, regardless of the risk of discovery, he switched on the lights and stood regarding his find with glistening eyes.

"Well, I've certainly never seen a mummy like this before!" he muttered. "But what a find! Ye gods! what an unprecedented find!"

The body was that of a tall, heavily built man clad from head to foot in the richly wrought accouterments of a Roman officer of the highest rank. His helmet, cuirass, greaves and armlets were elaborately decorated with figures taken from the mythology of ancient Rome, and had either been heavily plated with gold or else were composed of the solid metal. Contrary to the usual Egyptian custom, the body was not increased in linen swathings, but whatever method of embalming had been used, it had fulfilled its purpose well. The flesh was firm and not discolored; the features composed and life-like. The countenance was bold and remarkably handsome, though the mouth betrayed a slight weakness which the dark beard failed quite to conceal. Although both the beard and the short, curling hair were shot with gray, it was clear that he had been still in the full vigor of manhood when death had overtaken him—suddenly, it seemed, for his features showed no trace of the ravages of a long illness.

All these things Venn noted in a few seconds. Then he saw something else—a robe of Imperial purple caught on the left shoulder with a jewelled clasp.

"An Emperor—a Roman Caesar!" he gasped, and looked closer at the marble-like countenance. "Can it be Julius Caesar? Impossible—he was a shorter man and much older when he died. Who then? What Roman ruler died in Egypt? What, is it possible that this is—"

He bent forward and snatched up an object that lay upon the shining corselet. It was a small square of wood, thickly coated with wax—one of the "tablets" which took the place of notebooks in ancient times. Upon it a few words had been scratched in a trembling hand.

"*Aut Caesar aut nullus*—'Either Caesar or nothing'," Peter Venn read with staring eyes, and then the almost illegible signature beneath: "Marcus Antonius."

For a moment he stood like a man turned to stone as he strove to realize the stupendous importance of his discovery.

"Mark Antony?" he muttered. "The friend of Julius Caesar, the conqueror of Brutus and Cassius—the man who won the whole world and then threw it away for the love of—"

"Queen Cleopatra—myself!" said a low, sad voice at his elbow.

So absorbed had Venn been that he had quite forgotten the presence of the girl. At the sound of her voice he raised his eyes, stared for an instant at the vision that confronted him across the body of the dead Emperor, then recoiled with a cry.

She had thrown off the long evening wrap and now appeared in what seemed to him like a fancy-dress costume of an elaborate and rather daring nature, consisting as it did almost entirely of flashing jewels. Jewelled was the fringed girdle which encircled her slender waist, also the deep golden collar round her neck. Rubies gleamed in the eyes of the royal asp upon her brow; sapphires and emeralds flashed from the ground as she moved her sandalled feet. She seemed less like a woman than a flame of living fire.

"Are you mad?" he cried. "Cleopatra lived two thousand years ago and committed suicide over her lover's body after his defeat by Octavianus at Alexandria."

"Are you so certain of this?" she asked slowly.

"Of course. She died by the bite of an asp—"

The eyes of the golden serpent on her brow flashed red fire as she shook her head, a mocking smile playing about her lips the while.

"The old fable! Started by the Queen from motives of policy, spread by common report, garnered by the ancient historian, Plutarch, and recorded in his *Lives*; woven into undying poetry by Shakespeare in his famous play; repeated blindly by the smaller fry of the modern literary world—truly the story has many godfathers. Yet it is a fable nevertheless. Cleopatra did not die at Alexandria. She stands before you now!"

Peter Venn attempted to signify his opinion of her assertion by uttering a derisive laugh. But somehow the laugh refused to come. Wild though her words were, there was something so tragic in her manner that, fiercely though his reason might fight against it, he found his skepticism wavering. Surely, he argued, it must be something more than a

mere coincidence that brought her to him on the very night that the coffin was opened.

"I promised you a mystery, did I not, my professor?" she went on. "Listen, and you shall hear one—aye, and behold a picture of ancient Egypt more vivid and moving than a lifetime of poring over musty records could bring to your mind. Know then, Cleopatra—Plutarch notwithstanding—did not slay herself when Octavianus Caesar and his centurions came to drag her in chains to grace his triumph in Rome. Long years before, she had penetrated the Great Pyramid and wrested from its most secret place, in its most secret chamber deep down in the living rock, the most wonderful secret in the world. There, from the finger-tips of the statue of Isis, the Great Mother of All, fell the blood-red drops which well up from the very vitals of this planet, the mystic life-giving and life-preserving essence to which all nature owes its existence. And whosoever drinks of that draft shall never taste mortal death. I drank of it long before the great Julius fell beneath the daggers of Brutus and the rest and behold! I am living yet!

"Of the priest of Isis who revealed this wondrous secret to me, and of what befell him later, I do not intend to speak. Suffice to say that no sooner did I feel that immortal vitality coursing through my veins like growing fire than I resolved that I alone should hold the secret of its hidden source until I could find a fitting mate, who, after I had given to him this precious gift, should rule the world with me. I emerged from the Pyramid—alone—and from that hour began my task of bringing the world to my feet.

"You must read the history of that period to judge how far I succeeded in that aim. Kings and rulers became pawns in the game whose stake was supremacy—provinces the squares of the chessboard on which it was played—the whole known world was the board itself. I played and—for a time—won. For with the fuller, richer life bestowed by the mystic draft there had come a deeper, wiser perception of my fellow-creatures; a power to read their hidden thoughts, a knowledge how to use their wisdom and their folly, their virtues and their failings, for my own ends. But of all those whom I used and flung aside there was not one who had the power to light the flame of love within my heart. It seemed as if the power I had stolen from the Gods was a two-edged sword, wounding its Wielder with its backward stroke. While investing my body with immortality, it seemed to have killed the power of love in my soul. My triumphs and conquests turned to Dead Sea fruit in my mouth; it seemed as if I were destined to be the richest yet poorest of womankind. I was

even beginning to consider taking the alternant which the dead priest had entrusted to me; a pinch of greenish powder, enclosed in a hollow emerald set in a ring, which would counteract the life-giving draft and render me again mortal. My resolution was almost taken, when there came into my life the man whose body likes before you.

She stretched out her hand and laid it on the pallid brow with a gesture of infinite tenderness. Venn, his mind a tumult in which sanity fought to overcome a belief in the impossible, waited in silence for her to continue.

"Long before we met I had heard reports of Marcus Antonius, the Triumvir who with Octavianus and Lepidus ruled the Roman Empire. A brave, vain, handsome and fickle-minded soldier was the character that common rumor gave him. When I received his summons to appear before him in Cilicia to answer for having assisted Cassius in the recent war against the Triumvirs, I thought the task of changing my judge into my suppliant would be an easy one. I sailed down the River Cydnus to meet him, in a barge with gilded hull and sails of royal purple, rowed by silver oars which beat time to the music of flutes and harps. He stood to receive me on the shore in a golden chariot drawn by milk-white steeds, a wreath of ivy upon his proud head, a snowy mantle over his armor of dazzling gold. There were no words of recrimination or defense uttered now. Instead, a feast was spread and the multitude rejoiced, crying out that Bacchus was come to feast with Venus, for the common good of Asia. The sword was buried in the wine-cup, and softly-voiced lovers' vows took the place of the clash of contending legions. Nor was it pretense on my part. The sacred fire of love had kindled in my heart; I had found the man who was to sit by my side, god-like and immortal in very truth, ruling the world with me."

Peter Venn started and a dull red flush appeared on his sallow cheeks. So small a part had women played in his life that it needed the pangs of jealousy to reveal the fact that he loved this strange, beautiful being who had drifted across his path. He forgot the tale she was telling, with its manifold impossibilities; forgot that her own words proclaimed her either as an immortal being or else a lunatic; forgot that she was young and beautiful, he middle-aged and bent with study. All he knew was that he loved her. Mad or sane, mortal or undying, every fiber in his body impelled him to crush her slender form to his and shower kisses on those red, red lips until the light of love awoke in her long, slumberous eyes. She was incomparable, divine! Were her story true, small wonder

that she had swayed the destinies of nations as a hurricane shakes a dump of reeds!

Controlling himself with an effort, he realized that she was speaking again.

"For a space our lives were one long series of fetes and banquets, throughout which I narrowly observed the behavior of my chosen consort, weighing his soul's worth in a balance as fine as a jeweller's scales; aging, considering, and at last doubting. Handsome he was, and of a noble carriage, fearless in battle and generous to a fault; but his heart was fickle as the spring winds. I hesitated, putting off the day when I would take him to the Pyramid and endow him with a power equal to my own. I hesitated while Octavianus' fleet and legions mustered against my beloved, nor did his defeat at Actium spur me to the deed. Only after Antony's troops had deserted and he himself was a hunted fugitive did I form my resolve.

"But I had tarried too long. Antony, hearing a false report of my death, had already fallen on his sword. He died before I could reach him, and Olympus, my physician, a man whose skill exceeded that of the greatest masters of the craft, caused him to be embalmed and hurried in a secret place. Poor Olympus! He was a faithful servant, faithful unto death. He was captured by the victorious troops of Octavianus the following day, and died under torture rather than reveal the tomb of Antony.

"But I was allowed but little time for lamentation. News was brought that the enemy was advancing. I did not fear death—indeed I would rather have welcomed it—but I would never adorn the triumphant progress of the man who had torn my loved one from me. My preparations were quickly made. One of my female slaves, who resembled me somewhat in face and figure, was dressed in my crown and robes, laid upon the royal couch, and slain by the bite of an asp. Her violently contorted features easily passed for mine. The Romans proclaimed my death. I was safe."

A tone of infinite weariness had crept into her voice, but when she resumed her tale it was in livelier accents. She was like a jaded traveller who quickens his pace in a last effort to reach the long-desired goal.

"Aye, I was safe, and yet I longed for death. All the pomp and power which I could still grasp by stretching out my hand seemed as nothing now that Antony was dead—less than nothing, for now my immortality meant nothing but a long, empty pilgrimage through the world. I longed and prayed for the death I had defied. Then I thought of the green

powder which would bring oblivion. I eagerly searched my belongings. It was not there. Then I remembered. I had given the ring to Antony at one of our feasts, laughingly telling him it was the most precious thing in the world. In my grief and distraction I had allowed him to be interred with the ring still on his finger.

"Night and day I searched for the tomb — searched far more diligently for the secret of Death than I had for that of Life. But Olympus had done his work too well; the tomb could not be found. And he himself had died with his secret untold.

"From that hour my boasted immortality was but a living death. All my thoughts and energy were now directed, not to the shaping of nations and the dominating of men, but to search for those few grains of green powder which would buy my freedom from the life that had become a burden and a punishment. I shudder now as I recall those dreary, dreary years. I searched, I explored, I bribed, I cajoled — aye, I tortured and slew that I might find the hidden tomb. But it seemed as if I should never again possession of the drug I craved — until today."

"Today?" echoed Peter Venn, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes." She lifted the dead hand and slipped an emerald ring from one of the fingers. "Here is my order of release!"

She raised it to her lips — to kiss it, Venn thought. Too late he saw her real intention. The bezel of the ring had flown open as her finger pressed a hidden spring, releasing a tiny pinch of green powder between her eager lips. Venn dashed forward and caught her as she swayed . . .

Shock — horror — apprehension — the three emotions beat upon his brain, numbing it as though with physical blows. Everything before his eyes went blurred and indistinct, and when his vision cleared he found he was holding a withered, jewel-clad corpse.

At twelve o'clock, when the old night-watchman made his usual round, he found Peter Venn apparently hard at work at his accustomed task.

"So there were *two* o' them there mummies in that box, sir?" he said, as he came forward and looked curiously into the open case. "A soldier and his missus, maybe, buried together. Touching, ain't it, to see them lying there after all these years?"

Peter Venn nodded silently and, unseen by the other, a tear rolled down his cheek and fell upon the brow of the woman who, by devious paths, had now reached her appointed place.

Tales From Cornwall

by David H. Keller, M.D.

(author of *The Abyss*, *Heredity*, etc.)

No. 3 Raymond The Golden

This is the third of the Cornwall series, which Dr. Keller arranged into a single book, to be read in chronological order. And, of course, even when a "history" is such charming—and sometimes horrifying—fantasy, protocol requires that we pretend it really happened; thus, as a good historian, the author provides us with an "argument from dates" indicating the high spots of what has gone before, both in the earlier stories and in the "times between"; for this is the old-fashioned, story-book sort of history where each and every detail of each and every year is not gone into exhaustively, but the best "stories" are told.

ANTHON, LORD OF THE HUBELAIRES, asked his grandson, Raymond the Golden, to go with him to the shore of the Hungry Sea. As they sat on the sands he said, "You are my only grandson, Raymond. When I die you will be ruler. I wish you could inherit wealth, prosperity and fame, but we are a little people and there is nothing I can leave you save pride.

ARGUMENT FROM DATES

200 B. C.	Folkes-King Eric rules in Wearfold, Norway. Olaf is Lord of the House of Wolves in Juland.
190 B. C.	Balder, son of Olaf, is born.
189 B. C.	Thyra, daughter of Eric, is born.
171 B. C.	Balder adventures to Wearfold, kills a giant and marries Thyra.
140 B. C.	Odin, only son of Holga, is born.
100 B. C.	The Wolves are driven from Juland by the Norsemen. Balder is transmutated into an oak tree. Under the command of Lord Holga the Wolves sail southwest and find a new home in Armorica.
99 B. C.	Harold, son of Odin, is born.
77 B. C.	Edward, son of Harold, is born.
58 B. C.	Edward adventures to the east and marries an eagle. She lays an egg, hatches a boy, changes to a woman and calls her son Cecif.
57 B. C.	Caesar invades Gaul. The Wolves flee to Cornwall. Lord Harold dies and his son Edward becomes Lord. The family name is changed to Hubelatre.
43 A. D.	Claudius conquers most of England and builds the Hadrian Wall.
350 A. D.	The Romans are driven from England.
490 A. D.	The Hubelaires are never conquered, but repeated sieges of their castle, destruction of their lands, and frequent pestilences so weaken them that they leave Cornwall and sail to the Isle of Lundy in the Hungry Sea. Here they build a walled town and live at peace for thirty years.
430 A. D.	The Rathlings invade Lundy and attack the Hubelaires. After long fighting with heavy losses on both sides, peace is declared; but the Rathlings remain in Lundy.

"But there is somewhat I must tell you. Before we came to the Isle of Lundy we lived across the Hungry Sea in a land called Cornwall. There we held a mighty building called a castle, the like of which you have never seen. The Camhrians frequently tried to take it but never succeeded; however, frequent wars and disease so weakened us that we were forced to leave it. Before so doing, our Lord hid some of our treasures in a lower room and walled the door shut so none might find it. Because he had the vain hope that some day our people would return and once again become great in Cornwall, he drew a map showing where those treasures were. This chart has passed in succession from Lord to Lord. Now I give it to you. Cherish it greatly. Your oldest son must have it and know its meaning. In turn he must tell his son

and thus the secret will always be known to the Lord of the Hubelaires." He handed Raymond a small parchment.

"They must be great treasures," mused Raymond.

"Not what you think," his grandstire replied. "Neither gold, silver nor precious jewels. The tale, as handed down from father to son, is that long since our folk lived in a far land called Juiland and their Lord was a mighty man named Balder. He had a weapon called the Thor hammer, with which he killed a giant and thus won his bride. When he returned home he brought the giant's spear as trophy. Later we lived in Armortica and our Lord Edward owned a most unusual sword with a haft at either end. The story of his use of this sword is so magical that I can scarce believe it. For many generations these three weapons, the Thor hammer, the spear and the sword were venerated, and finally they were hidden as I have told you."

"We are at peace," Raymond said. "The weather is pleasant and the Hungry Sea at rest. I could sail there and bring these wonderful weapons back to Lundy. It would not take long."

"No. The time has not yet come. We will soon rejoice in the spring-time sacrifice. I hope you will marry then for I cannot die in peace till I know you have a son. The Hubelaires must live on and on, for something as fine as our family must never perish. Since your father died in battle against the Rathlings you have been my only hope. Have you decided which of our maidens you wish to mate with? There are only three old enough, but any one of them would make you a lovely bride. Before this our young men always married outside the family, and that was good; but now that cannot be done."

"Perhaps none of them would want me, Grandfather."

"Why not? Your long golden hair shines in the sunlight. You are dean of limb and strong. You can play on the harp and sing sweetly. None of our men can excel you in the use of the battle-axe or long sword. Yet, withal, you have a tender way in caring for our lambs, and the wild deer come at the sound of your voice."

"All that may be true," Raymond replied with a laugh, "but methinks a woman wants more than all of this. And just what a woman needs to satisfy her I cannot say."

Thus he spoke, because he did not want to tell his grandfather a longing in his heart which he had kept secret from even his kindly mother, Matje.

At the west of the island was a place called Mistland, and what was

there or why, or who lived there, none knew; for in the curling white vapors none could find his way, but, walking circlewise, ever came out as he came in and was none the wiser. Follwar, the fisherman, had told Raymond tales of the Mist, and how, from his boat on the waves of the Hungry Sea, he had seen the high peaks and heard the wailing of the sea gulls and the white foam of the surf caressing the rocks. The fisherman had added that it was a good place to stay away from, if you wanted to return safely at nightfall. Also Raymond had heard Lord Anthon and the other oldlings tell tales of wanderers lost in the white air, and, finally, arriving at the place of their outseting.

A year before, Raymond, filled with a desire to succeed where all had failed, had left his home one morning. Cheese and bread were in his wallet, his sword was lashed to his belt, and his three-stringed harp was tied to his back. He walked along the beach till he came to Skullery Mountain, where the sands changed to sharp rocks. Around him was the white, seething mist that hid all before it and covered the skin with the cold, wet hand of the Deathlings.

Now, always before this those attempting to enter Mistland had gone through the low pastures, fearing the surf and the sharp rocks and holding Skullery Mountain to be impassable. But now the Golden One, with the salt ocean at his back and the gulls flying friendly around him, climbed like a goat till he reached the topmost crag, and then, pausing, looked down. From this point of vantage he saw what had never before been seen by any Hubelaire. After that he came often but told no one what he had seen. However, his hair became more golden and his songs sweeter.

Then came late spring: the first strawberries had blossomed and fruited and all prepared for the yearly sacrifice. The Hubelaires wended their way in gay procession to offer the gods the best of their fruit, honey, wine and grain. Lord Anthon preceded the family while Raymond, with flowers in his hair, led those who played on the harp and flute. The little children ran with chains of daisies. Doves fluttered in the air, tied with one foot to the babes who were carried in their mother's arms. Right glad were all hearts for the coming of another year and the mercy shown them by the great gods who ruled them from the sky. All were in festive garb, their arms and war harness being left in their homes.

With trembling hand the aged Lord laid fire to the sacrifices on the altar. Then the three and thirty souls of the House of Hubelaire sang the songs which had been sung by their ancestors at the *Bakar* of Balder in Jutland, the land that was far away and long ago. And, of those

who played on the harps, none made sweeter or more mirthful music than Raymond the Golden, while, high in the sky, a lark trilled.

Lord Anthon made the sacrificial prayer and all knelt, each asking for that he most desired, with pure hearts and fast-shut eyes. As thus they prayed, the Rathlings rushed upon them from all sides.

The lark ceased singing in the sky; the sun darkened behind thickening clouds of ominous gray; the wind blew biting cold from off the Hungry Sea. Three of the Hubelairs men lay dead on the dark earth, while all living Hubelairs, bound with ropes and earth-stained, lay in a pile.

Sardain, King of the Rathlings, laughed loudly and, as he laughed, threw filth on the sacred altar and horse dung in the faces of the three dead men. All that day the Hubelairs died, and as each one died, the living, bound and helpless, lay watching. For their soul-letting was not clean and peaceful, but was accomplished by all the tortures the barbarians could devise and determine in their twisted souls. So all the men and women younglings and even the babies at the breast were soul-letted till finally only one of the thirty and three, who had gone so happily to the yearly sacrifice, was alive.

Then the bonds of Raymond were loosed and he was led face-to-face before Sardain. The King's hands and all his hairy body were red with blood and to the right and left and under his feet were a multitude of pieces of what had once been the House of the Hubelairs.

"The battle is over, Raymond!" he shouted, while the blood-streaked spittle dripped from his mouth.

The Golden One laughed defiantly. "No! It has just begun!"

"How say you so? Thus far I have spared you. A whim of mine. I wanted you to see the others suffer. Was it not clever how I used the wild horses? Did you ever see anything as comical as the way the hot sword had its will with your virgins? One of my men is a clever worker with colors. He will put the story down on parchment—picturing how each of you died. I will have the paintings bound in a book. You will join the others; the last page is reserved for you. I have a few fine plans for you. But first I will grant you one request. Ask me your desire—but beware that you ask not too much—it must not come between me and my pleasure."

Raymond the Golden looked at him, and his heart grew cold, but not from fear. He prayed to the Gods he wot of, but not for mercy, and then he spake.

"Allow me to be gone from here till the third day; then I will return here or to your house on the other side of the island. Then you may do with me as you will, if only you leave me go till the third day."

"Good!" replied Sardain. "Whatever happens will be good. We have all the boats and it is too far for you to swim to Cornwall. If you come back it will be well, and if you think you can hide on Landy it will be rare sport for my young men and deerhounds to hunt for you. All the hours you are away I will perfect my plans for my greatest pleasure. We will wait for you here where we have a fire and plenty of fresh meat. We have not had such fine meat for many a year. Let him go! In three days we will see him. I wish I could tell which of those pieces of carrion belonged to the bitch who dropped him. I would save some of her for him to eat on his return."

The circle opened. Raymond bounded away like a frightened rabbit; but he was not afraid.

It was dusk when he reached the base of Skullery Mountain, and so he bathed in the ocean and then lay on the wet sand till the full moon rose out of the Hungry Sea. Because he treaded familiar paths and haste impelled him, he climbed the crags till he reached the topmost and then dropped down on the other side into the dark forest of Misland. Running along a well-worn path he came to the end of his journey. There in a green meadow, bathed in moonlight and free of the mist that elsewhere hung heavily, stood a round tower, and about it, cud-chewing, lay some cattle.

There Raymond stood and sang a song of his own making, and never had he sung the song save under this tower. Thus he sang:

"Golden sunshine all around,
Flowers springing from the ground,
Love does everywhere abound,
Since the day my Love was found.
Haste then, Love, and to me fly,
Hasten, hasten, or I die."

Then from the tower came a damsel and she ran to him and pressed him to her while two great wolfhounds fawned on him and licked his hands and a broad-shouldered servant came with a torch in one hand and a mace in the other. All together entered the tower.

"I have a thousand questions to ask you," she said.

"For the love you bear me," he replied, "give me bread and wine and a little cheese and let me sleep by the fire on the bear skin, for I am very tired and my spirit is cold within me. When I wake on the morrow I will tell you all."

These things she did, and, while he rested, murmuring in his broken sleep, she and the carl and the great hounds watched over him and over on the hearth the fire was kept brightly burning.

Morning came at last and with it the sunbeams breaking like lances through the rolling mists, and the damsel brought ale and warmed it and a piece of savory fish. When Raymond awoke she nourished him. Then they went hand-in-hand to the ocean and there bathed while the wolfhounds sported between them in the waves. So they came back and sat them on a great mound of moss in the sun at the foot of the stone tower. There, quietly and calmly, for he was very much of a man, he told her all the happenings of the feast day, and how he came to be with her. Because she was high-born, she heard his tale in silence, though there was a twisting of her hands, and, as he spoke, she grew older and her skin ivory for all the body-blood drawing towards her heart.

After he had finished with the speaking, they sat very quiet, and the dogs lay at their feet, their noses between their paws and their eyes sorrowful, for they were fine-bred and could comprehend much of the emotions of their loved ones.

Finally the damsel spoke; "So this is the end?"

"An you look on life as I do and cherish me as I do you, it will be but the beginning of the House of the Hubelaires, instead of a sad and final ending," he replied, "for nothing as fine as our House can die and come to an ending. The Golden Sun which we worship has been swallowed by the Hungry Sea and seems to be dead, but always, on the next morn, it comes alive once more. So it will be with us. I cannot believe that for evermore the Rathlings shall live without punishment for the dark work of yesterday, and there must be another closing of the story."

Then the blood left her heart and all her face turned rosy. "Years ago," she answered him, "my father's ship was wrecked on these rocks and only Walling, our house carl, some dogs and a little childling came alive to the shore. Here we lived in Mistland till you came and found me. Since then I have but lived till the time of your next coming. With you away, Mistland was dark and cold. Because I know you, I know you will wend your way back to your soul-going and leave me alone; and I am not sure I can live without you, but whatever you plan will

be also of my waiting. Only spare me some hours so I can brew for you a simple that I know of, and, ere you come to your ending, drink it for my sake; for well I know that it will ease the pain and help you the better to meet the soul-letting that is being prepared for you."

This Raymond the Golden promised and she went into the tower, but Walling and the last of the Hubelaires walked down to the beach, and, at the end of the talking, the house carl made a sacred promise and swore to it by all the gods he wot of. The old mao and the young drew blood from their arms and mixed it, and at that time no one but the two of them knew of the sayings on the sand.

After supper, Raymond the Golden took the damsel by the hand and they walked on the beach listening to the waves murmuring to the sands till the moon was full and they looked upon the golden ball with longing. At last they returned to the thick moss at the base of the tower and there, to the moonlight, they sat down. "Sing to me!" the woman said.

Then Raymond the Golden sang!

"Now little white clouds, on pine trees tall,
Threw shimmering shadows over the wall,
Where the spiders silent held their sway,
Spinning their webs of silvery gray.
There on the grass lay a maiden fair,
With cheeks of cream and raven hair.
So lightly she rested on the grass,
That it hardly bent at its lovely task.
Around her flew the moths so white,
To shade her eyes from the moonbeams bright.
Over her body a soft sheet spread,
Made of down from a dandelion bed.
Out from the flowers a perfume rare,
Was brought by the wind with loving care,
And scattered over her body slight,
To pleasure her as she slept that night,
While mockingbirds, from the thicket near,
Sang songs of love for her sleeping ear."

He paused.

"And what then?" whispered the damsel.

"The rest cannot be sung," replied Raymond the Golden.

So they lay with each other, silent.

Later in the night, she woke, sobbing, and she whispered,

"Sing to me, beloved, for my comforting."

And he sang a song that, thus far, he had never sung to anyone:

"Roses blush when they compare,
Their beauty with my lady fair.
At her feet, the birds of spring,
Silent keep, to hear her sing.
If I were sod, to lie beneath,
The fairy footfalls of her feet,
My happiness would be complete.

Then, in the garden, place my body dead,
So, when she picks the roses red,
Upon my loving heart she soft will tread —
She soft will tread.

And I, within my chambered walls so moist,
Will tremble and so bappily rejoice,
To hear again the music of her voice,
The music of her lovely voice."

moss, telling Walling the house carl, to watch against her wakening. He told Walling of the greatness of the Hubelaires and how the family must not die. He gave him the parchment showing where the treasures were hid in the castle in Cornwall and said that it must be given to his son and that the carl must never let the lad forget that he was a Hubelaire. Then, with the flask of simples in his wallet, he went his way but he left his heart and life with the damsel.

Thus the Rathlings had to deal only with the body of Raymond and, though Sardain did his uttermost, it was all too soon done with and the barbarian was greatly discontented. He commanded his artist to make a picture of the soul-letting of Raymond the Golden and put on the last page of the book, to show that this man was the last of the Hubelaires. After that the Rathlings left the altar and the remaining meat around it to the wolves and from that time on they lived in the houses of the Hubelaires.

Now when the damsel had spent the full number of days, she went to her couch and there was delivered of a boy child with flaxen hair. Walling, who minded and tended her, washed the child and brought him to her to suckle.

"It is a man child and will do what is required of him," he said, and the damsel was pleased at the strong tug of the babe and said, "I will call him Raymond and he shall be a true Hubelaire and when the hour comes he shall do the thing for which he was made."

The child slept.

But soon the damsel cried in anguish and when Walling reached her, he found another child, born of her travail, and this baby was small and twisted and very dark. Walling took the child to bathe it and was minded to kill it, but the mother read his mind, "This only also came from the seed of my dead husband, so I will nurse him too and they will grow up company for each other; and I will call him Doom."

Summers passed and fifteen winters howled over Mistland. One night after the lads were asleep, the white-haired woman called the house carl to the fireplace.

"Walling, you have been more than a carl to me, and would that I could pay you, but the tale of your service is not yet told. The time draws near when we must have the Book, and well I know that in the getting of it you may lose your life and leave all the finishing of the task to me; yet, get the Book we must. It will soon be time for the Spring Festival; mayhaps the Rathlings will be drunken with wine in memory of that day, and you can get the Book without harm. But, oh, be sure to return, for I would not know how to struggle on without thy help." And the woman laid a tender hand on the old man's head.

Then Sardain, King of the Rathlings, commanded that the Book be brought before him, and he and all his followers made merry over what the artist had painted on the pages. They drank till they slept, and last of all the King slept, after vomiting on the last page, whereon was pictured the soul-letting of Raymond the Golden.

When he woke, the Book was gone; and fear fell on him because of the going of the Book. After that none dared speak to him of it, and always he walked with his eyes glancing backward over his shoulder. Yet, in bravado, he drank his slumber drink from a certain skull he had deansed that fateful day and tried to satisfy himself that it all had really happened and that there was no cause for fear.

From then on Walling, the house carl, worked daily with the golden

youth, teaching him all he knew of the use of the sword and shield and mace; how to thrust and guard. Month by month the lad grew and finally he could toy with the carl and do with him as he would. The little twisted lad would clap his hands at the sights he saw when the two men fought. He loved his wonderful brother with a great love.

At night the white-haired woman sat by the fire while the carl and the twinlings lay on skins at her feet. Then she told them of their father and explained that they were the last of the House of the Hubelaitres. She told of the bravery and gentleness of the House and how their father had loved her ere he died. When the moon was full she sang them the songs that Raymond had sung, though always with a sob in her throat. Finally she told them of the last days and opened the Book and made young Raymond place his hand with hers on the last page and swear that he would purge the land of the blot on it and revenge his people; but she would never let the little, twisted dark lad swear.

"No, Doom," she would answer to his pleadings. "This is not a task for you. You are to stay here and guard me, and look after the cattle and be my man."

Then Doom would hug and kiss her, while Raymond went out to walk in the moonlight with Walling and the hounds till his heart beat more slowly and the blood-desire left him; for full well he realized the thing that must be done and eager he was to do it, knowing he would never rest till it was done.

Thus the twinlings came to their manhood, but Doom remained small, like a little child. That winter Walling, the house carl, came to his ending and Raymond laid him in a dry cave, setting at his feet a jug of wine. Within a few weeks the woman said to her glani son, "The time that your father and I dreamed of years ago has come."

"I cannot leave you in your sickness and age," he demurred.

Doom heard them talking. That night, after she slept, he crept to her couch, kissed her hand gently, and went out into the night. All that night he walked slowly, guided by the light of the moon; when morning came he paused on the heather to eat bread and cheese. There he was joined by a little dark man. "My little lad, what is your name and what brings you out on these mountains all alone?" he asked.

"I am not a little lad," replied Doom, "for I am now of age and therefore a man. My name is Doom, son of Raymond the Golden of the House of Hubelaitres, and I am going to avenge the murder of my father and his people, who were so foully put to death by the Rathlings before I was born."

"How can you do that? There are so many of them and you are but one."

"That is true, yet I am the only one to do it. There are but three of us, my mother, and my brother Raymond, and me. Brother had to stay with Mother, for she is not strong and needs his care, so I left them. Though I am only one, somehow I will find a way to accomplish that which must be done."

"Since you are so determined," the little man replied, "I will help you. There are other ways of fighting than with the sword or battle axe." Then very slowly he explained how Doom, though small, could accomplish that which he desired. After saying his say, he vanished.

Raymond was puzzled by the absence of his brother but nourished his failing mother, tended the fire and cared for the cattle. She now spent all her days before the fire, never speaking of the desire that was uppermost in her heart. In a few weeks she slept away and her son placed her by the side of Walling. At her feet he placed some golden curls that she, cherishing, had cared for during many weary years. Then he loosed the cattle, put his harness on, with sword in belt, and started on the path to do that which needed to be done.

Biding time, as the moon was not yet full, he stopped at the place where the Hubelaires had died and, gathering the bones, piled them before the altar and covered them with rocks. All that day he went foodless, praying to the only gods he wot of. Then by night, calm and certain of the ending of this adventure, he went to the great house and hid on the thatched roof, parting the rushes so he could overlook the hall and the banquet table, and here he stayed.

Once again, at the Spring Festival, the Rathlings were gathered in the great hall, and counting all, from Sardain the King down to the newest suckling, there were few over two hundred souls; and there were no more, for lacking other enemies they had fought now and then, these twenty-two years, among themselves. This week they were at peace and all gathered for three days of feasting and drinking. Carefully through the years they had saved three firkins of wine, grown old in the cellars of the house.

After much drinking the first night many of the men and all the women and younglings were drunk, so Raymond hit his thumb and waited. Early on the second night Sardain commanded that the three old firkins be brought from the wine vault and that all should drink from them. He said that it was the wine of their enemies, and he boasted that he had

combined with it the blood of Raymond the Golden, who, dying, had been hied like a pig. Hubelair wine savored by rich red blood of the last of their enemies! And once again he commanded that all should drink and that wine should be poured into the mouths of even the smallest ones. This was done as he had ordered, and soon most of the Rathlings fell asleep.

Then the yellow-haired giant on the roof knew that his hour had come. Sliding to the ground he entered the Great Hall, and none stopped him or gave him pause. He walked to the throne of King Sardain. The King looked from him to the skull from which he had just drunk, and so great a fear overcame him that he died.

Inside the hall all was quiet, while outside a wolfhound whined and ran from that place with terror at his haunches.

Then, from the shadows, came a little twisted shape and slipping quietly toward the golden-haired man, fell at his feet with arms around his legs and cried. Raymond picked up the little one and held him close as a mother would her babe. "Oh, Doom, where have you been and what have you done?" he asked.

"Oh, Raymond, my twining, I feared for you," the little one spoke between sobs. "And one against so many was not right. He was my father, Raymond, as well as yours. If anything happened to me I could be spared better than you, and you had to stay and care for Mother. So I came here, to do that which had to be done."

Raymond but held him tighter, as he crooned over him. "Oh, Doom, my little, gentle brother! How could you be so brave and how came you all the way, over the mountain and through the Mist? What did you do? For it seems to me they are all dead. Even the habies have fallen to the floor. Oh, Mother! I did not know it would be like this when I swore! What did you do, Doom? What did you do?"

The little one made no answer but pleaded to be carried from that place of death. Raymond took up his father's skull and wrapped it in the gown that the damsel had worn that night a golden lad had sung to her, and placed it carefully in his wallet. Carrying the little one in one arm and his naked sword in his right hand he walked around the great hall, but there was no need of the sword, for Death had breathed on all the Rathlings.

Raymond carried the sleeping Doom into the pure air and went his way back to Mistland. After resting and caring for the cattle, he took the gown and what was wrapped in it and laid it at the feet of his sleeping mother.

Then he built a currach in which he determined to sail across the Hungry Sea to Cornwall and recover the treasures of his family, long hid in the Castle of the Hubelaires. He had the parchment showing where it was secreted, and remembered well all that Walling had told him concerning these weapons used by the great Hubelaires in past years. But when he and Doom eased the currach from the shore, a strong wind blew from the north and after some days they landed on the coast of Armorica. Then Raymond knew that the gods had decreed that this adventure was not for him but that some other Hubelaire would, in the years to come, sail to Cornwall and recover the treasure.

In Armorica Raymond became great and married the daughter of a Prince and established a little principality in the dark forest; and this land he called Walling, in memory of the house earl. Babies were born to Raymond and his lovely wife and they were cared for and loved by little, twisted Doom.


Raymond locked the Book in a wooden chest.

Many years passed. Then one night Lord Raymond, beset by memories and compulsion, took the Book from out the chest. Never once had he opened it since his mother had closed it, but now he could no longer withhold the story from his grandchildren.

So he told them all the tale and showed them the pictures, page by page, till he came to the page with the dried vomit splashed over the painting of the death of Raymond the Golden.

Something was more newly drawn in one corner of that page. An oddish mushroom; and written beneath it were these words:

"These, dried and powdered, I mixed with the wine in the three firkins which held our father's blood. Thus, I, Doom, fulfilled my name, and brought an ending to the wicked enemies of the House of the Hubelaires."



The Phantom Drug

by A. W. KAPPER

My Index to the Weird Fiction Magazines has only one listing under the name of A. W. KAPPER—the present story, which was originally published as listed below, and reprinted in the November 1939 issue of WEIRD TALES.

This document, written in a clear, bold hand, was found in the burned ruins of an asylum. The records of this institution had been saved, and upon investigation it was found that an eminent drug analyst was confined within its walls for one of the most horrible crimes ever recorded. He was judged and found insane after telling, as his defense, a fantastic story. After reading his story, which coincides so well with the known facts, one can not help but wonder . . .

IT'S NIGHT AGAIN—one of those threatening, misty nights that you see in dreams. I'm afraid of it—it returns like a mockery to goad my memory to greater torture. It was on a night much like this that it happened; that horrible experience that gives my mind no rest—

They wouldn't believe the facts I told them—said my story was the

fabrication of an unsound mind, as an alibi for the horrible crime I had committed. I swore on my honor that I had told the truth, but even my friends refused to believe me; so it is with little hope of winning your credulity that I leave this written document. But here are the facts.

I was at work in my laboratory analyzing some drugs that I had received in a new consignment from India. A tube, which contained a phosphorescent liquid, attracted my attention and I read the note my collector had sent with it.

He stated that it was supposed to have the power of transforming the mind of a human into the body of an animal; a superstition which the natives of the inner jungle firmly believe. They claim it is compounded from the brains of freshly slain animals, each brain containing an amount of this substance relative to its size.

I naturally scoffed at the claims for this drug, but decided to test it on one of my laboratory animals so that I could place it in its proper category. I injected a small amount into the system of a rabbit and watched closely the reaction. For a minute it was motionless except for the natural movements of breathing. Then its eyelids closed slowly until they were completely shut and it appeared in a deep lethargy. For half a minute more there appeared no change, then its eyes flicked open and I looked, not into the timid eyes of a rabbit, but those of a scared animal.

With a sudden spring it leaped for the laboratory light, which was suspended by a chain from the ceiling. Its paws, however, were unfitted to grip the chain or the sloping reflector, and it fell to the floor only to spring frantically at the curtain in a vain attempt to climb it. Another leap sent it to the top of a cabinet, where it upset several bottles, which fell to the tiled floor and smashed.

This aroused me from my stupor and I endeavored to catch it. I might as well have tried to catch its shadow. From cabinet to mantel, from mantel to curtain, curtain to shelf, leaving a trail of spilled and broken bottles in its wake. As it sprang about, strange squeaky barks came from its throat.

Perspiring and out of wind I gave up the chase, picked up an overturned chair and sat down to ponder the matter out. I observed the rabbit's actions closely. Now it was on a shelf looking at its short stump of a tail and chattering excitedly. Then it rubbed its ears and seemed startled at their length.

I wondered what was the explanation of this. It flew around like a monkey. A monkey! that was it. The drug made animals act like mon-

keys. Then the claim of the natives was true and the drug *did* have the power of performing a transmutation! I wondered if the drug always had the same result and decided to test it again on a white mouse that I took from another cage.

I carefully injected a small amount into its blood-stream. After a minute had expired, during which it made no move, it began to twitch about. The blood was pounding in my temples and my eyes were glued to its quivering form. Slowly it roused from its stupor and then stood on its hind legs while it flapped the front ones by its side.

"What the deuce—" I began. Then I understood. The drug affected each animal differently, dependent on the amount of the dose. As I arrived at this conclusion I noticed the rabbit was hopping about in its natural way, all trace of its former erratic movements gone. Never before in my experience had any drug such a startling effect on the brain as to give it the complete characteristics of a different animal.

My old and dearest friend, Rodney Calk, was living with me and I went in his room to tell him what had occurred. He was lying on the bed covered by a heavy blanket which did not entirely conceal the hulking form, once the proud possessor of enormous strength, now rubbed by sickness and old age. He was twenty years older than I. He liked to talk of the days when his prowess was commented upon where strength and courage counted. His voice still held some of its old timbre as he greeted me and noticed my excitement.

"Hello," he said. "Something interesting happen?"

With eager enthusiasm I detailed the effects the drug had had on the rabbit and the mouse. I could tell, from the expression on his face, that he was intensely interested, but when I had finished he lay back on his pillow as if in deep thought.

"Doc," he said quietly, "I think that at last I am going to have my wish fulfilled."

I looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"You know," he said, growing excited, "you know how I've longed to have my old strength back again, or at least to be active for a time; well, there you have the substance that can perform that miracle."

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"Why can't I take some of that drug," he reasoned, "and control the body of some animal for a while?"

"Rodney, you are crazy," I cried, aghast. "I will not consent to your doing such an insensate thing. It would mean your death within a few

minutes. Can you imagine yourself as a monkey, hopping and swinging about, with that old body of yours? It could never stand the strain."

"You forget something," he smiled.

"What?" I asked.

"My mind would no longer control this body, but that of some active and healthy animal."

"I should say not—" I began, then stopped and reasoned the matter out. The rabbit had been controlled by a monkey's mind; what happened to the rabbit's mind? It was only logical to suppose that they had been exchanged and that some monkey in far-off India had been hopping about like a rabbit during the transition.

"It is probable," I admitted, "that you would be controlling another body, but you forget that your body would be controlled by an animal's mind. That would be far more risky, as was proved by the rabbit's antics in the laboratory."

"You can take care of that," he argued, "by giving me a potion to numb the motor area of my brain, and by giving me a sleeping powder. Then, no matter what impulse is aroused, it can not be carried into an action."

I pondered his words carefully, and had to admit to myself that his reasoning was plausible. Rodney pleaded his cause with desperate earnestness.

"Here am I, an old man, chained to a bed for the rest of my life—a year or so at the most. Life holds little attraction for me, handicapped as I am. My body is weak, but the spirit of adventure is still strong within me. Surely you can not deny me this favor; if not to gratify the wish of an old man, then on the claim of our friendship."

"I have but one thing left to say," I replied, "and that is—if you take some of this drug, then so will I."

Rodney hesitated at involving me in his rash wish.

"It is not necessary for you to do so," he said. "You are healthy, and in the name of your profession, you owe the world a service. Nothing claims me."

"Nevertheless, that arrangement stands," I said. "Do you think I could ever bear to have anything happen to you through this enterprise, without my sharing it? Never. We have stood together in all things in the past and will continue to do so until the end."

Rodney placed his hand on mine. Neither of us spoke for a few minutes, but we felt the bond of friendship more closely than ever before.

"I can't ask you to risk it," he said huskily, and tried to hide the disappointment that his voice betrayed.

"And I can not refuse your wish," I replied. "Besides, it is in a way my duty to undergo an experience that may prove of value in research. I must admit that I feel thrilled at the prospect of this adventure too. When shall we try it?"

"I am ready now," he replied. "What preparations are necessary?"

"Hardly any," I said. "I'll go down to the laboratory to get the sedatives and a hypodermic needle for this drug. I may as well bring my safety kit along."

Before I locked the back door I glanced out into the night. The air was surcharged and oppressive, and the uncanny stillness that precedes a storm sent a chilling premonition over me. I locked the door, gathered the articles I needed and returned to the bedroom.

"An electrical storm is coming up," I said.

Rodney did not answer. His eyes were on the tube containing the phosphorescent drug. He was breathing faster and becoming excited and impatient.

"Better quiet down a bit, Rod," I admonished. My own heart was pumping strangely and the air seemed exceedingly warm; I thought it best to hide my perturbation from him, however. An unexpected crash of thunder made our nerves jump.

"We're as nervous as a couple of kids on their first pirate expedition," laughed Rod. His voice was high-pitched and taut.

I mixed a sedative and a sleeping potion for him and a stronger mixture for myself. These we drank. Then I took off my coat, bared my left arm and bade Rod roll up his pajama sleeve.

"We shall not feel the effects for a minute or two," I told him, "and by that time the potion we drank will start its work. Just lie quiet."

I forced my hand to be steady as I injected the drug into his arm, then hastily refilled the needle chamber from the tube and emptied it into my own arm. Rodney had put his hand by mine as I lay down beside him and I clasped it fervently. A drowsiness crept over me as the seconds slipped by, then — something snapped, and I knew no more.

An unfamiliar atmosphere surrounded me when my mind began to function again. Slowly the haze wore away and I stirred restlessly as strange impressions flooded my brain. I was amongst a heavy growth of trees, rank grass and hush. My nose felt peculiar to me, then I cried out in wonder. It was not a faint ejaculation that came from my throat, however, but a roar—a volume of sound that made the very earth

tremble, and with good cause; for I, or rather my mind, was embodied in an elephant. My nose!— it was now a trunk!

I became intoxicated with the thought of the strength I now possessed, seized a tree with my trunk, and with a mighty tug, pulled its roots from the ground and hurled it aside. My cry of satisfaction was a boom that rolled a peal of thunder.

A low growl sounded behind me and I swung my huge bulk quickly around. A tiger lay crouched in the undergrowth. I raised my trunk threateningly and stamped angrily, but the beast did not move. Then I looked into its eyes and understood. It was Rodney! He had possession of a tiger's body!

He was overjoyed at my recognizing him, and although we could not talk to each other, we showed our pleasure plainly enough. He gloried in the agility and strength that were now his, and took prodigious leaps and flips in a small clearing.

Finally, tired and winded from his play, he came to me and rubbed his back against my leg, purring like an immense cat. With a flip of my trunk I swung him on my back and raced through the jungle for miles. A river cut its way through this wilderness and we drank our fill—a gallon of water seemed but a cupful to my stupendous thirst. I was amusing myself by squirting water on Rodney when a roar came from a distance, accompanied by heavy crashings.

We faced the direction of the disturbance and waited breathlessly. Over the top of the waving jungle grass there appeared the head of an angry elephant. That its temper was up was all too plain. Its ears stuck out from its head like huge fans and its upraised trunk blasted forth a challenge as it charged along.

I looked anxiously at Rodney. The light of battle was in his eyes and I knew that he would be a formidable ally. It was too late to flee. My opponent was too close and the river was a barrier which, if I tried to cross, would give my adversary the advantage of firmer footing. My temper was aroused also, and as it was not my own body that was at stake, I did not fear the coming conflict.

The huge elephant facing me charged, and I met him half-way. Two locomotives crashing together would not have made that glade tremble more than it did when we met.

My enemy gave a scream of fear and pain when we parted and I soon saw the reason why. Rodney had waited until we were locked, then had launched himself at the throat of my rival. He had sunk his teeth deep in its tough hide and was tearing the flesh from its shoulder and chest with his bared claws.

All this I had seen in an instant, and as the monster turned on Rodney I charged it from the side, driving both tusks deep in. Almost at the same instant Rodney severed its jugular vein. The elephant trembled, swayed, and toppled to the ground.

I was unhurt except for an aching head, the result of that first onslaught, but Rodney had not fared so well. As we turned our fallen adversary I noticed that one of his legs had been crushed. The light of victory was in his eyes, however, and he seemed happy despite the pain he must have been suffering.

It was then that I noticed a change coming over me; a sort of drowsiness. At first I thought it was due to the exertion I had just gone through, but as its effect became more marked and insistent, I realized with a tremor of terror what it really was. The elephant's mind was trying to throw my own out of possession of its body!

I glanced at Rodney apprehensively to see if he was undergoing the same change. He was still in complete control. Then the truth dawned on me. The immense hulk I had been dominating had absorbed the power of the drug faster than the body Rodney controlled!

I hurried to his side and tried to make him understand that he should crawl into the jungle and hide until the effect of the drug had worn off. It was of no use. The more I stamped and raged, the more his eyes smiled at me as though he thought I was trying to show him how pleased I was at our victory.

More and more insistent and powerful did the elephant's mind become. It began to get control of its body and fixed its eyes with a hateful glare on Rodney's recumbent form. I struggled desperately to wrest control from that conquering mind, but in vain. The drug's force was ebbing fast.

One last warning I managed to blast out, and Rodney faced me. Horror of horrors! He thought I was calling him! Slowly and painfully he crept toward me. My thoughts became dim, and I struggled, as if in a dream, to conquer again the huge hulk he was approaching, but it was too late. The monster I had once controlled was in almost complete possession now, and I was but an unwilling spectator viewing things through a veil that grew steadily heavier.

When Rodney was but a few feet away the body under me reared in the air—a flash of fear showed in Rodney's eyes as he realized the awful truth—and as his shrill scream rent the air, I was swallowed into blackness.

I don't know how long I lay in a daze, in Rodney's bedroom. Consciousness came back slowly. As events crowded themselves into my mind, I felt for Rodney's hand. It was not by my side. I sat up in bed, weak, and trembling all over.

At first I did not see him, then — I screamed in livid terror!

Rodney lay beside the bed, *every bone in his body broken as though something weighing several tons had crushed him!*

The Reckoning

Although the polls are held open until the final proofs of each issue are received and corrected, this copy is first prepared when we make our master layout with the original proofs. At least half of the time, ballots received between the two points do no more than confirm the order in which the stories stand at this time. Most of the rest of the time, there is a slight shift either in the middle or at the lower end of the scale; rarely is a first place story knocked out after the preliminary assessment, but it has happened.

There was no contest at all for first position this time, but there was contention for second and third place. Lafferty's tale received several "outstanding" designations, as well as #1 votes, below a 0 for the serial; but others did not like the story at all. This, I expected—but what has astonished me is the absence of detestation for the serial, in light of the vehemence of the small but loud opposition when your votes were asked. Perhaps this opposition is holding fire until later, when all is gathered together; meanwhile, it is gratifying to see some enthusiasm for this story from some who still do not particularly like Jules de Grandin.

Here's the finals: (1) *The Devil's Bride* (part one), Seabury Quinn; (2) *The Oak Tree*, David H. Keller, M.D.; (3) *Cliffs That Laughed*, R. A. Lafferty; (4) a tie: *Flight*, James W. Bennett & Soon Kwen-Ling, and *The White Dog*, Feodor Sologub; (5) *The Milk Carts*, Violet A. Methley.

The Rope

by Robert Greth

No author really likes to have the title of his story changed, but sometimes an original title (while apt enough) tells too much. Not that ROBERT GRETH has given us a one-punch tale, which will fall flat if you see too far ahead; but rather that there can be an extra bonus if you do not. That is why we changed the title; the astute reader will, of course, see ahead—but why spoil the fun for the reader who is distracted from the obvious?

"HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT the plot to assassinate Field Marshal Rommel?" asked Colonel von Beck, gazing across the desk at the little beggar who stood, dirty, tattered, bearded, and hugging a leather bag to his body.

A dozen times since the round-up of the conspirators he had asked the same question, and received the same answer. It didn't matter whether he believed Achmed; the facts were borne out and the arrests made.

The informer spoke no German, of course, but his French was sufficient to make him understood. His unkempt beard bristled with a smile, showing yellow, snagged teeth.

"They thought I was one of them, *Monsieur*. Did I not save your very excellent Rommel, *oui*? Is that service not worth a reward?"

The colonel fingered the ridges of an old sabre scar on his right cheek. He had taken this assignment in a combat area, hoping for promotions, but this was the extent of his glory—interrogating an old beggar in a bad plot.

Then he lighted a cigarette, an act which put longing into the beggar's eyes. Von Beck smiled thinly, and shook a cigarette out of the pack and onto the desk, motioning for the beggar to help himself. Achmed grabbed it greedily and put it into his mouth, his hand disappearing into the folds of his ragged robes, and emerging with a match which he lighted with a dirty thumbnail. He took deep, delighted puffs.

The colonel's close-cropped gray hair had a wet look, the stifling heat brought beads of sweat to his brow. He was glad the informer had come to him—better the *Abwehr* than the *Gestapo*. Hitler's brutal, upstart police, with their lack of finesse, would have thwarted careful investigation. The Englishman, masquerading as an Arab, had already been arrested, along with his Moslem cohorts. Doubtlessly the *Gestapo* would have killed Achmed, just to play safe. He studied the dossier on the beggar: footpad, smuggler, grave-robber; a list of his arrests were impressive.

"How much value do you place on your information?" asked von Beck.

The Arab's cigarette was nearly consumed, but he cherished it, puffed it; as if it were his last.

"No money, please, *Monseigneur le Colonel*," he said. "Perhaps some cigarettes, *non*? Much better than money," he said, winking slyly.

The colonel knew that Wagner, his orderly, had a facility for finding scarce items.

"Very well, you'll have your cigarettes," said von Beck cynically. "Take them and sell them on the black market."

Achmed held the butt of his cigarette between the long dirty fingernails of his thumb and forefinger, took one last puff, then dropped it into the ashtray on the desk.

"*Merci, Monseigneur.*"

The colonel wondered what precious thing was in the bag that the beggar hugged so dearly to his body. He could no longer resist his curiosity. He walked from behind the desk, his hard heels resounding on the floor.

"What's in the bag?" he demanded, holding out his hand.

Achmed retreated, his face taking on a wary look.

"It's nothing, *Monseigneur*!" he cried. "Just a keepsake!"

Von Beck wrenched it from the Arab's hands and shook it upside down over his desk. He stared in disbelief when he saw a length of old rope fall out. He ascertained that it was six feet long. It may once have

been brown in color, and it was certainly very old for when von Beck touched it a strand broke off. He quickly withdrew his hand as though a shock had vibrated through the rope into his body. The ancient rope seemed to possess a sinister life of its own! How could he imagine such a thing? Was it the heat here in the Libyan Desert?

The beggar moved to reclaim the rope, but von Beck grasped his wrist.

"What is it?" he asked hoarsely. "What does it mean?"

The sight of that crumbling rope taunted him. Again he touched the fragments on his desk, and they turned to dust between his fingers. He derived nothing eerie from the pieces, and attributed his recent feelings to the infernal desert heat, and the treachery of the Kasbah.

"As you see, *Monsieur*, it is but an old piece of rope. The rope's a devil, Colonel, it attracts like a wanton, and I'm powerless to resist. When I'm alone, I look upon it as a lover would the face of his innamorata. It seems to whisper to me, but as yet I can't understand the words. Be content, now Colonel, with a love you can understand!"

"You stole it!" accused von Beck.

Achmed's manner became wheedling, gesturing with his dirty upturned palms. "Not so! I found it in an old cave in the Holy Land."

The colonel touched the rope again, and felt an electrifying sensation course through his body. He shuddered, horrified. He thought he heard a susurrations such as whispered words. Colonel von Beck returned to his desk, unnerved by the enigmatic effect of the rope. He took three cartons of cigarettes out of the desk drawer.

"I want you here, when the trial for the plotters comes up," he said, shoving the cartons across the desk. "If you try to run—I'll have you shot!"

Achmed turned up his nose as if his reward were inadequate.

Von Beck frowned, and put another cigarette carton on the desk. Then Achmed shoved the rope and the cartons into his leather bag.

After the informer left, von Beck sat in troubled thought. The plot on Rommel's life had been nipped in the bud, with only the preliminaries of trial remaining.

Von Beck drew an arm across his sweating forehead, and glanced up at the inoperable fan in the ceiling. His request for it to be repaired had been two days past.

He strode to the bedroom door where Wagner was cleaning.

"Wagner—find someone to fix that fan—now!"

"Yes, sir," said his orderly, clicking his heels, his bald head shining in a ray of sunlight.

The next morning he breakfasted under a fan that created a comforting breeze. The breakfast wasn't enjoyable, with its ersatz coffee and tasteless pastries.

A knock sounded on the door.

"Come in!"

Lieutenant Meister entered, saluted briskly, and frowned, his red eyebrows knotted.

"Our beggar's dead, sir!"

He tried to steady his hand as he shielded the match against the wind from the fan when he lighted his cigarette.

"How did he die?"

"He hanged himself!"

"Did you leave everything as you fond it?" asked von Beck calmly.

"He's still hanging—I thought you'd want to observe the scene."

The colonel grimaced but said nothing.

In a few minutes the staff car took them into the Kasbah, and they mounted the stairs of a building that smelled of garlic, oil, and mutton.

The shabby room consisted of a faded rug and a bed piled with tattered covers--the only other item was a rusty brazier in the corner.

Achmed hung grotesquely from a rope attached to a wooden beam. Colonel von Beck shuddered as he looked at the distended eyes, purpled face, and mouth distorted by strangulation. Of course the colonel had seen death before, long ago, as a young officer in the First War, yet he felt pity for this wretched informer.

He eyed the leather bag on the bed.

"Cut him down!" he ordered curtly, picking up the bag.

He heard the body hit the floor with a thud.

The ancient rope wasn't in the bag!

"Was anything removed from this bag?" he asked.

"No, Colonel."

"Put the rope that he hanged himself with in the bag," he said thoughtfully. "It'll represent physical evidence, if we need it."

Lieutenant Meister coiled the rope and placed it into the bag and handed it to the Colonel. Von Beck's thoughts couldn't stray from the memory of the crumbling rope--he was frightened and fascinated, yet now that it was missing he was both relieved and alarmed.

Back in his office, the colonel wrote his report of the final disposition of the plot to assassinate Field Marshal Rommel, underscoring the fact

that the informer had committed suicide. Nor did he fail to mention that the informer was rewarded for his information with four cartons of cigarettes. Mention, too, was made of the sole Englishman in the plot, of how he had been dressed in mufti and must therefore die by the firing squad. He was satisfied with the report, a tribute to vaunted Teutonic thoroughness.

Then he sat back, gazing at the old leather bag on his desk, wondering what had become of that compelling, weird rope. He couldn't tear his eyes from the bag, for in some way it seemed to embody the wretched Achmed—the beggar's despair, his poverty of spirit.

He pressed his hand against his eyes in a nervous gesture. *I'll have to request a transfer to the Fatherland*, he thought, *anywhere, so long as I get out of this desert.*

He continued to think of the conventional, sturdy rope that had choked the life out of the informer. Surrendering to a sudden impulse, he put his hand into the bag and drew out the rope. Then he flung it from him, frightened—for the rope that he had taken from the bag was the vestigial remains of the ancient one that had been Achmed's treasure. Even now, as he stared at it, his thoughts disordered, his feelings influenced in a way he didn't comprehend, he was ready to reject the credibility of his own eyes. For the bag hadn't been out of his possession, and he had seen the lieutenant deposit the banging rope into it. Then, almost convinced that there had been a previous oversight, he picked up the bag and shook it over the desk. He even thrust a shaking hand in the bag and assured himself that it was empty.

He asked himself, "Was the rope that ended Achmed's life indeed this one on my desk? But of course nothing so shredded and decayed could ever have supported the beggar's body." His hand shook as he dialed Lieutenant Meister.

"Meister, did you put that rope in the leather bag?"

He knew that Meister's answer would be in the affirmative.

"Well, it's not in the bag," he answered, and he heard the lieutenant's gasp.

Suddenly he heard muffled whispers, as though words were spoken too deeply, too distantly to be understood. He returned the worn old rope to the bag.

On his desk was a letter from the high command in Berlin. Until now he had refrained from opening it, and now bitterly, after reading it he crumpled it and threw it upon the floor. His promotion had been

denied. He had been an officer in the army since the First World War, but promotions had consistently passed him by.

Once back in his Berlin apartment, with blackout curtains drawn, Colonel von Beck sat before a desk where a lamp reflected on a leather bag that contained the ancient rope, reminding him of his Libyan days with Rommel. Nightly he sat and fondled the rope, thrilling to its vibrancy, hearing whispered words which he didn't understand. As some men assert their devotion before religious symbols or at a shrine, von Beck spent mesmerized nights poring over that old rope. He was confident that some day those whispers would be transmuted into words.

He glanced nervously at his wristwatch. Tomorrow a briefcase containing brandy bottles ought to be delivered to headquarters in Rastenburg, East Prussia. Upon its receipt Lieutenant Meister would phone him.

His telephone jingled, and he recognized a voice he had heard twice before since he had returned to Berlin.

"Von Beck," said General Ketzel, "does your intelligence report hint of any kind of a plot to seize the government? If you could uncover such information it would go a long way to high rewards—the *Führer* would be grateful. Think about it! Something's hatching—I know!"

"You may be sure, sir—"

He heard the click as the general hung up.

Naturally he was concerned about the officers' plot in which he was involved, and he shuddered to think of his fate if it failed. On the other hand, if he should perform his duty as a patriotic German, a just promotion would be his. But at any cost the madman and his underlings had to go!

He looped the frail rope, making a slip knot, while some of the crisp, frayed strands broke off. Was it possible that those whispers grew stronger, nearly recognizable?

He wondered idly, "Why did I make that loop? I've never done it before—I've only responded to its uncanny influence."

The urgent ringing of the telephone awakened him. A blinding shaft of sunlight reminded him that he had slept the night at the desk, and that Wagner had opened the curtains. His wristwatch showed 12:49 P. M.

"Valkyrie," said the lieutenant, the excitement in his voice scarcely subdued.

Hearing the password, von Beck breathed a sigh of relief.

"Are you certain—?"

"The brandy was delivered at 12:42 P. M.," said Meister curtly.

Von Beck replaced the receiver and walked to the window, surveying the blackened, broken shell of a city. He shivered, cold and nervous.

So Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg had delivered the briefcase with its explosive brandy. That meant that Hitler was dead! His hope of a promotion was gone, but Germany was saved, for now the generals could sue for peace with the United States and England.

Wagner rapped on the door and entered, coming to attention.

"You were sleeping so soundly at the desk last night, sir that I—"

"No matter," said von Beck brightly. "It's a fine day, and I need some of that awful coffee."

"I found some real coffee, Colonel, and some eggs, too," said Wagner proudly.

"Wonderful—and don't tell me how you managed it!"

After Wagner returned to the kitchen, the phone rang.

"The brandy didn't affect him," he heard Lieutenant Meister say in an unnatural voice. "I hear the southern part of Spain is pleasant these days."

The phone fell out of von Beck's hand, and he slumped into the desk chair, staring in bewilderment. Then Hitler had escaped! The plot had failed, and all those implicated would be arrested, and put to cruel torture. As he fingered the ancient rope with its looped end, it seemed to wriggle and the whispers grew louder, more urgent.

Now he wouldn't be part of an heroic plot—he would be a hunted man, an exile in Spain at the best. It wasn't too late to salvage something from the ashes of his hopes.

He picked up the telephone.

"General Kettel. I have some information that will interest you—concerning the attempt on *der Führer's* life. Yes, sir, I can name names. Lieutenant Meister whom I know—Count von Helldorf, General Landemann . . . Thank you, sir, I'd be honored to work on your staff . . ."

Colonel von Beck didn't feel patriotic; rather he felt ashamed. To save his own skin, for personal aggrandizement, he had betrayed honorable men.

The rope transformed itself before his eyes, becoming like new, shedding the decay of ages; he felt it taking on strength. He no longer felt frightened but was immersed in remorse. He had betrayed Meister, faithful Meister . . .

Now he discovered that the noose fitted around his neck. He heard the whispers growing louder now, and knew they were shaping into words.

"My betrayal too was for personal gain. Only the rope that cleansed me will free you of your guilt?"

Colonel von Ileck, bewildered and weak, stood on his desk chair while he carefully fixed the rope to the chandelier.

A REVOLT OF THE GODS

by Ambrose Bierce

MY FATHER WAS A DÉODORIZER of dead dogs, my mother kept the only shop for the sale of cats'-meat in my native city. They did not live happily; the difference in social rank was a chasm which could not be bridged by the vows of marriage. It was indeed an ill-assorted and most unlucky alliance; and as might have been foreseen it ended in disaster. One morning after the customary squabbles at breakfast, my father rose from the table, quivering and pale with wrath, and proceeding to the parsonage thrashed the clergyman who had performed the marriage ceremony. The act was generally condemned and public feeling ran so high against the offender that people would permit dead dogs to lie on their property until the fragrance was deafening rather than employ him; and the municipal authorities suffered one bloated old mastiff to utter itself from a public square in so clamorous an exhalation that passing strangers supposed themselves to be in the vicinity of a saw-mill. My father was indeed unpopular. During these dark days the family's sole dependence was on my mother's emporium for cats'-meat.

The business was profitable. In that city, which was the oldest in the world, the cat was an object of veneration. Its worship was the religion of the country. The multiplication and addition of cats were a perpetual instruction in arithmetic. Naturally, an inattention to the wants of a cat was punished with great severity in this world and the next; so my good mother numbered her patrons by the hundred. Still, with an unproductive husband and seventeen children she had some difficulty in making both ends cats'-meat; and at last the necessity of increasing the discrepancy between the cost price and the selling price of her carnal wares drove her to an expedient which proved eminently disastrous: she conceived the unlucky notion of retaliating by refusing to sell cats'-meat until the boycott was taken off her husband.

On the day when she put this resolution into practice the shop was thronged with excited customers, and others extended in turbulent and

restless masses up four streets, out of sight. Inside there was nothing but cursing, crowding, shouting and menace. Intimidation was freely resorted to—several of my younger brothers and sisters being threatened with cutting up for the cats—but my mother was as firm as a rock and the day was a black one for Sardasa, the ancient and sacred city that was the scene of these events. The lock-out was vigorously maintained, and seven hundred and fifty thousand cats went to bed hungry!

The next morning the city was found to have been placarded during the night with a proclamation of the Federated Union of Old Maids. This ancient and powerful order averred through its Supreme Executive Head that the boycotting of my father and the retaliatory lock-out of my mother were seriously imperiling the interests of religion. The proclamation went on to state that if arbitration were not adopted by noon that day all the old maids of the federation would strike—and strike they did.

The next act of this unhappy drama was an insurrection of cats. These sacred animals, seeing themselves doomed to starvation, held a mass-meeting and marched in procession through the streets, swearing and spitting like fiends. This revolt of the gods produced such consternation that many pious persons died of fright and all business was suspended to bury them and pass terrifying resolutions.


Matters were now about as bad as it seemed possible for them to be. Meetings among representatives of the hostile interests were held, but no understanding was arrived at that would hold. Every agreement was broken as soon as made, and each element of the discord was frantically appealing to the people. A new horror was in store.

It will be remembered that my father was a deodorizer of dead dogs, but was unable to practice his useful and humble profession because no one would employ him. The dead dogs in consequence reeked rascally. Then they struck! From every vacant lot and public dumping ground, from every hedge and ditch and gutter and cistern, every crystal rill and the clabbered waters of all the canals and estuaries—from all the places, in short, which from time immemorial have been preempted by dead dogs and consecrated to the uses of them and their heirs and successors forever—they trooped innumerable, a ghastly crew! Their procession was a mile in length. Midway of the town it met the procession of cats in full song. The cats instantly exalted their backs and magnified their tails; the dead dogs uncovered their teeth as in life, and erected such of their bristles as still adhered to the skin.

The carnage that ensued was too awful for relation! The light of

the sun was obscured by flying fur, and the battle was waged in the darkness, blindly and regardless. The swearing of the cats was audible miles away, while the fragrance of the dead dogs desolated seven provinces.

How the battle might have resulted it is impossible to say, but when it was at its fiercest the Federated Union of Old Maids came running down a side street and sprang into the thickest of the fray. A moment later my mother herself bore down upon the warring hosts, brandishing a cleaver, and laid about her with great freedom and impartiality. My father joined the fight, the municipal authorities engaged, and the general public, converging on the battle-field from all points of the compass, consumed itself in the center as it pressed in from the circumference. Last of all, the dead held a meeting in the cemetery and resolving on a general strike, began to destroy vaults, tombs, monuments, headstones, willows, angels and young sheep in marble—everything they could lay their hands on. By nightfall the living and the dead were alike exterminated, and where the ancient and sacred city of Sardasa had stood nothing remained but an excavation filled with dead bodies, and building materials, shreds of cat and blue patches of decayed dog. The place is now a vast pool of stagnant water in the center of a desert. The stirring events of those few days constituted my industrial education, and so well have I improved my advantages that I am now Chief of Misrule to the Dukes of Disorder, an organization numbering thirteen million American workngmen.



The Devil's Bride

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *Master Nicholas*, *The Cloth of Madness*, etc.)

(Part Three)

The Story Thus Far

Beautiful Alice Hume vanished during the final rehearsal for her wedding in the presence of her fiancé and a group of friends including her mother, her family physician, Doctor Samuel Trowbridge, and Trowbridge's eccentric associate, the French physician-detective, Doctor Jules de Grandin. The little Frenchman discovered traces of a yellow powder which, he explained to Trowbridge, was *bulala-gwai*, the "little death" used by the natives of the French Congo to produce temporary paralysis. Alice, he declared,

had been abducted while the wedding party was rendered unconscious by *bulala-gwai*.

De Grandin also believed that the disappearance was connected with a girdle of tanned human skin that Alice had worn. The girl told him that the belt was known as "the luck of the Humes" and had been in the family a long time.

He found a concealed document in the family Bible, written by Alice's ancestor, David Hume, and relating how he had been sold as a slave to the devil-worshipping Yezidees, had rescued the daughter of their chief from becoming the "bride of

SEABURY GRANDIN QUINN, born 1889 and still with us as this is being typed, has been a mortician, among other things, and an author by avocation. It is this background of experience which is responsible for the feeling of realism that the medical details in his stories can give you: the feeling is not based on illusion, contrived by a writer's cleverness in concealing ignorance, but on the fact that the information is authentic and reliable as of the time when the story was written. This was the state of physiological and medical knowledge as of 1930-31.

Between April 1925 and 1950 or 1951, Mr. Quinn wrote 93 stories dealing with his French occultist, detective, and surgeon, Jules de Grandin. All were accepted and published in *WEIRD TALES*, starting with October 1925, which introduced Dr. Trowbridge and "Professor" de Grandin in *The Horror on the Links*, and ending with *The Ring of Bastet* in the September 1951 issue. Dr. Trowbridge had appeared briefly (as a spear carrier, Mr. Quinn tells me) in a story that ran in *THE THRILL BOOK* some time earlier; but this story is no more part of the series than Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Outlaw of Torn*, wherein a possible ancestor of Tarzan appears, can be considered part of the Tarzan series.

The present story is the only full-length novel dealing with de Grandin, although another tale, *Satan's Stepson*, hovers around novella length, and could have appeared in WT as a two-part serial. It appears in *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*, rather than *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, which has been the home for our revival of the series, simply because readers would have had to wait nine months for a three-part serial to be concluded in a quarterly magazine—much too much of a muchness, I trust you'll agree!

Ten of the stories have been slightly revised and updated, and in two instances titles slightly altered, for Mycroft & Moran's edition of *The Phantom Fighter*, which can be obtained from the publisher at \$5.00 the copy. The address is Sauk City, Wisconsin, 53583. While it would not be impossible for us to obtain permission to reprint these, we shall not do so while the book is obtainable, confining ourselves to those stories available only in the old magazines.

Satan," had married her, and later brought her to America.

Despite a sentence in the old manuscript warning Hume's descendants that an attempt might some time be made to "bring home" one of the daughters of his line, Alice's mother refused to admit any connection between the Yezidees legend and her daughter's disappearance. But that very night Mrs. Hume was found

murdered by a strangling-cord in her own boudoir.

De Grandin, joined by Inspector Renouard of the French secret service, and Baron Ingraham, known as "Hij", of the British secret service, raid the devil-worshippers during a performance of the infamous Black Mass, rescue Alice Hume, kill one of the priests of the cult and capture another.

18. Reunion

LOOKING VERY CHARMING AND DEMURE in a suit of Jules de Grandin's lavender pajamas and his violet silk dressing-gown, Alice Hume lay upon the chaise-lounge in the bedroom, toying with a grapefruit and poached egg. "If you'd send for Mother, please," she told us, "I'd feel so much better. You see"—her voice shook slightly and a look of horror flickered in her eyes—"you see there are some things I want to tell her—some advice I'd like to get—before you let John see me, and—why, what's the matter?" She put the breakfast tray upon the tabouret and looked at us in quick concern. "Mother—there's nothing wrong, is there? She's not ill? Oh—"

"My child," de Grandin answered softly, "your dear mother never will again be ill. You shall see her, certainly; but not until God's great tomorrow dawns. She is—"

"Not—dead?" the word was formed rather than spoken, by the girl's pale lips.

The little Frenchman nodded slowly.

"When? How?"

"The night you—you went away, *ma pauvre*. It was murder."

"Murder?" slowly, unbelievably, she repeated. "But that *can't* be! Who'd want to murder my poor mother?"

De Grandin's voice was level, almost toneless. "The same unconscionable knaves who stole you from the marriage altar," he returned. "They either feared she knew too much of family history—knew something of the origin of David Hume—or else they wished all earthly ties you had with home and kindred to be severed. At any rate, they killed her. They did it subtly, in such manner that it was thought suicide; but it was murder, none the less."

"O-oh!" The girl's faint moan was pitiful, hopeless. "Then I'm all alone; all, all alone—I've no one in the world to—"

"You have your *fiancee*, the good young Monsieur Jean," the Frenchman told her softly. "You also have Friend Trowbridge, as good and staunch a friend as ever was; then there is Jules de Grandin. We shall not fail you in your need, my small one."

For a moment she regarded us distractedly, then suddenly put forth her hands, one to Jules de Grandin, one to me. "Oh, good, kind friends," she whispered, "please help me, if you can. God knows I am in need of help, if ever woman was, for I'm as foul a murderess as ever suffered death; I was accessory to those little children's murders—I was—oh

— what was it that the lepers used to cry? 'Unclean'? Oh, God, I am unclean, unclean—not fit to breathe the air with decent men! Not fit to marry John! How could I bring children into the world? I who have been accessory to the murder of those little innocents?" She clenched her little hands to fists and beat them on her breast, her tear-filled eyes turned upward as though petitioning pardon for unpardonable sin. "Unclean, unclean!" she wailed. Her breath came slowly, like that of a dumb animal which resents the senseless persistency of pain.

"What is that you say? A murderess—*you*?" de Grandin shot back shortly.

"Yes—I lay there on their altar while they brought those little boys and cut their—oh, I didn't want to do it; I didn't want them to be killed; but I lay there just the same and let them do it—I never raised a finger to prevent it!"

De Grandin took a deep breath. "You are mistaken, *Mademoiselle*," he answered softly. "You were in a drugged condition; the victim of a vicious Oriental drug. In that all-helpless state one sees visions, unpleasant visions, like the figments of a naughty dream. There were no little boys; no murders were committed while you lay thus upon the Devil's altar. It was a seeming, an illusion, staged for the edification of those wicked men and women who made their prayer to Satan. In the olden days, when such things were, they sacrificed small boys upon the altar of the Devil, but this is now; even those who are far gone in sin would halt at such abominations. They were but waxen simulacra, mute, senseless reproductions of small boys, and though they went through all the horrid rite of murder, they let no blood, they did perform no killings. No; certainly not." Jules de Grandin, physician, soldier and policeman, was lying like the gallant gentleman he was, and lying most convincingly.

"But I heard their screams—I heard them call for help, then strangle in their blood!" the girl protested.

"All an illusion, *ma chère*," the little Frenchman answered. "It was a ventriloquial trick. At the conclusion of the ceremony the good Trowbridge and I would have sworn we heard a terrible, thick voice conversing with the priest upon the altar; that also was a juggler's trick, intended to impress the congregation. *Non, ma chère*, your conscience need not trouble you at all; you are no accessory to a murder. As to the rest, it was no fault of yours; you were their prisoner and the helpless slave of wicked drugs; what you did was done with the body, not the soul. There is no reason why you should not wed, I tell you."

She looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes. Though she had mastered her first excess of emotion, her slender fingers clasped and unclasped nervously and she returned his steady gaze with something of the vague, half-believing apprehension of a child. "You're sure?" she asked.

"Sure?" he echoed. "To be sure I am sure, *Mademoiselle*. Remember, if you please, I am Jules de Grandin; I do not make mistakes.

"Come, calm yourself. Monsieur Jean will be here at any moment; then—"

He broke off, closing his eyes and standing in complete silence. Then he put his fingers to his pursed lips and from them plucked a kiss and tossed it upward toward the ceiling. "*Mon Dieu*," he murmured rapturously, "*la passion délicieuse*, is it not magnificent?"

"Alice! Alice, beloved— Young Davissou's voice faltered as he rushed into the room and took the girl into his arms. "When they told me that they'd found you at last, I could hardly believe—I knew they were doing everything, but—" Again his speech halted for very pressure of emotion.

"Oh, my dear!" Alice took his face between her palms and looked into his worshipping eyes. "My dear, you've come to me again, but—" She turned from him, and fresh, hot tears lay upon her lashes.

"No buts, *Mademoiselle*!" de Grandin almost shouted. "Remember what I said. Take Love when he comes to you, my little friends; oh, do not make excuses to turn him out of doors—hell waits for those who do so! There is no obstacle to your union, believe me when I say so. Take my advice and have the good *cure* come here this very day, I beg you!"

Both Davissou and Alice looked at him amazed, for he was fairly shaking with emotion. He waved a hand impatiently. "Do not look so, make no account of doubts or fears or feelings of unworthiness!" he almost raged. "Behold me, if you please; an empty shell, a soulless shadow of a man, a being with no aim in life, no home nor fireside to bid him welcome when he has returned from duty! Is that the way to live? *Mille fois non*, I shall say not, but—

"I let Love pass me by, my friends, and have regretted it but once, and that once all my aimless, empty life. *Ecoulez-moi!* In the spring-time of our youth we met, sweet Heloise and I, beside the River Loire. I was a student at the Sorbonne, my military service yet to come; she *cher Dieu*, was an angel out of Paradise!

"Beside the silver stream we played together; we lay beneath the poplar trees, we rowed upon the river; we waded barefoot in the shallows. Yes, and when we finished wading she plucked cherries, red ripe cherries

from the trees, and twined their stems about her toes, and gave me her white feet to kiss. I ate the cherries from her feet and kissed her toes, one kiss for every cherry, one cherry for each kiss. And when we said *bonne nuit—mon Dieu*, to kiss and cling and shudder in such ecstasy once more!

"Alas, my several times great grandsire, he whose honored name I bore, had cut and backed his way through raging Paris on the night of August 24 in 1572—how long his bones have turned to ashes in the family tomb—while her ancestors had worn the white brassard and cross, crying '*Messe ou mort! A bas les Huguenots!*'"

He paused a moment and raised his shoulders in a shrug of resignation. "It might not be," he ended sadly. "Her father would have none of me; my family forbade the thought of marriage. I might have joined her in her faith, but I was filled with scientific nonsense which derided old beliefs; she might have left the teachings of her forebears and accepted my ideas, but twenty generations of belief weigh heavily upon the shoulders of a single fragile girl. To save my soul she forfeited all claim upon my body; if she might not have me for husband she'd have no mortal man, so she professed religion. She joined the silent Carmelites, the Carmelites who never speak except in prayer, and the last fond word I had from her was that she would pray ceaselessly for my salvation.

"*Hélas*, those little feet so much adored—how many weary steps of needless penance have they taken since that day so long ago! How fruitless life has been to me since my stubbornness closed the door on happiness! Oh, do not wait, my friends! Take the Love the good God gives, and hold it tight against your hearts—it will not come a second time!

"Come, Friend Trowbridge," he commanded me, "let us leave them in their happiness. What have we, who clasped Love's hand in ours long years ago, and saw the purple shadow of his smile grow black with dull fatality, to do with them? Nothing, *pardieu!* Come, let us take a drink."

We poured cherry brandy into wide-mouthed goblets, for de Grandin liked to scent his rich bouquet before he drank, I studied him covertly as he raised his glass. Somehow, the confession he had made seemed strangely pitiful. I'd known him for five years, nearly always gay, always nonchalant, boastfully self-confident, quick, brave and reckless, ever a favorite with women, always studiously gallant but ever holding himself aloof, though more than one fair charmer had deliberately paid court to him. Suddenly I remembered our adventure of the "Ancient

Fires"; he had said something then about a love that had been lost. But now, at last I understood Jules de Grandin — or thought I did.

"To you, my friend," he pledged me. "To you, and friendship, and brave deeds of adventure, and last of all to Death, the last sweet friend who flings the door back from our prison, for —"

The clamoring telephone cut short his toast.

"Mercy Hospital," a crisp feminine voice announced as I picked up the instrument. "Will you and Doctor de Grandin come at once? Detective Sergeant Costello wants to see you just as soon as — oh, wait a minute, they've plugged a 'phone through from his room."

"Hullo, Doctor Trowbridge, sor," Costello's salutation came across the wire a moment later. "They like to got me, sor — in broad daylight, too."

"Eh? What the deuce?" I shot back. "What's the trouble, Sergeant?"

"A chopper, sor."

"A *what*?"

"Machine-gun, sor. Hornsby an' me wuz standin' be th' corner o' Thirty-fourth an' Tunlaw Streets half an hour back, when a car comes past like th' hammers o' hell, an' they let us have a dose o' bullets as they passed. Pore Hornsby got 'is first off — went down full o' lead as a Christmas puddin' is o' plums, sor — but I'm just messed up a little. Nawthin' but a bad ar-rm an' a punctured back, praise th' Lord!"

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "Have you any idea who —"

"I have that, sor; I seen 'im plain as I see you — as I would be seein' ye if ye wuz here, I mean, sor, an' —"

"Yes?" I urged as he paused a moment and a swallow sounded audibly across the wire.

"Yes, sor. I seen 'im, an' there's no mistake about it. It were th' felly you an' Doctor de Grandin turned over to me to hold fer murther last night. I seen 'im plain as day; there's no mistakin' that there map o' him."

"Good Lord, then he did escape!"

"No, sir; he didn't. He's locked up tight in his cell at headquarters this minute, waitin' arraignment fer murther!"

19. The Lightning-Bolts of Justice

THAT EVENING ALICE SUFFERED from severe headaches and shortly afterward with sharp abdominal pains. Though a careful examination disclosed neither enlarged tonsils nor any evidence of me-

chanical stoppage, the sensation of a ball rising in her throat plagued her almost ceaselessly; when she attempted to cross the room her knees buckled under her as though they had been the boneless joints of a rag-doll.

Jules de Grandin pursed his lips, shook his head and tweaked the needle-ends of his mustache disconsolately. "*L'hysterie*," he murmured. "It might have been foreseen. The emotional and moral shock the poor one has been through is enough to shatter any nerves. *Hélas*, I fear the wedding may not be so soon, Friend Trowbridge. The experience of marriage is a trying one to any woman—the readjustment of her mode of life, the blending of her personality with another's—it is a strain. No, she is in no condition to essay it."

Amazingly, he brightened, his small eyes gleaming as with sudden inspiration. "*Parbleu*, I have it!" he exclaimed. "She, Monsieur Jean and you, *mon vieux*, shall take a trip. I would suggest the Riviera, were it not that I desire isolation for you all until—no matter. Your practise is not so pressing that it can not be assumed by your estimable colleague, Doctor Phillips; and Mademoiselle Alice will most certainly improve more quickly if you accompany her as personal physician. You will go? Say that you will, my friend; a very great much depends on it!"

Reluctantly, I consented, and for six weeks Alice, John Davisson and I toured the Caribbean, saw devastated Martinique, the birthplace of the Empress Josephine, drank Haitian coffee fresh from the plantation, investigated the sights and sounds and, most especially, the smells of Panama and Colon, finally passed some time at the Jockey Club and Sloppy Joe's in Habana. It was a well and sun-tanned Alice who debarked with us and caught the noon train out of Hoboken.

Arrangements for the wedding were perfected while we cruised beneath the Southern Cross. The old Hume house would be done over and serve the bride and groom for home, and in view of Alice's breavement the formal ceremony had been canceled, a simple service in the chapel of St. Chrysostom's being substituted. Pending the nuptials Alice took up residence at the Hotel Carteret, declaring that she could not think of lodging at my house, warm as was my invitation.

"All has been finished," de Grandin told me jubilantly as he, Renouard and Ingraham accompanied me from the station. "The justice of New Jersey, of which you speak so proudly, she has more than justified herself. Ob, yes."

"Eh?" I demanded.

Renouard and Ingraham chuckled.

"They gave it to him," the Englishman explained.

"In the throat—the neck, I should remark," Renouard supplied, wrestling bravely with the idiom.

"The party will be held tomorrow night," de Grandin finished.

"Who—what—whatever are you fellows saying?" I queried. "What party d'ye mean, and—"

"Grigor Bazarov," de Grandin answered with another laugh, "the youthful-bodied one with the aged, evil face; the wicked one who celebrated the Black Mass. He is to die tomorrow night. Yes, *parbleu*, he dies for murder!"

"But—"

"Patience, *mon vieux*, and I shall tell you all. You do recall how we—Monsieur Hiji, Renouard and I—did apprehend him on the night we rescued Mademoiselle Alice? Of course. Very well.

"You know how we conspired that he should be tried for a murder which he did not perpetrate, because we could not charge him with his many other crimes? Very good. So it was.

"When we had packed you off with Monsieur Jean and his so charming fiancée, your testimony could not serve to save him. No, we had the game all to ourselves, and how nobly we did swear his life away! *Mor-dieu*, when they heard how artistically we committed perjury, I damn think Ananias and Sapphira hung their heads and curled up like two anchovies for very jealousy! The jury almost wept when we described his shameful crime. It took them only twenty minutes to decide his fate. And so tomorrow night he gives his life in expiation for those little boys he sacrificed upon the Devil's altar and for the dreadful death he brought upon poor Ahigail.

"Me, I am clever, my friend. I have drawn upon the wires of political influence, and we shall all have seats within the death house when he goes to meet the lightning-bolt of Jersey justice. Yes, certainly; of course."

"You mean we're to witness the execution?"

"*Mais oui; et puis*. Did I not swear he should pay through the nose when he slew that little helpless lad upon the Devil's altar? But certainly. And now, by damn, he shall learn that Jules de Grandin does not swear untruly—unless he wishes to. Unquestionably."

* * * *

Defily, like men accustomed to their task, the state policemen patted

all our pockets. The pistols my companions wore were passed unquestioned, for only cameras were taboo within the execution chamber.

"All right, you can go in," the sergeant told us when the troopers had completed their examination, and we filed down a dimly lighted corridor behind the prison guard.

The death room was as bright as any clinic's surgery, immaculate white tile reflecting brilliant incandescent bulbs' hard rays. Behind a barricade of white-enameled wood on benches which reminded me of pews, sat several young men whose journalistic calling was engraved indelibly upon their faces, and despite their efforts to appear at ease it took no second glance to see their nerves were taut to the snapping-point; for even seasoned journalists react to death—and here was death, stark and grim as anything to be found in the dissecting rooms.

"The chair," a heavy piece of oaken furniture, stood near the farther wall, raised one low step above the tiled floor of the chamber, a brilliant light suspended from the ceiling just above it, casting its pitiless spotlight upon the center of the tragic stage. The warden and a doctor, stethoscope swung round his neck as though it were a badge of office, stood near the chair, conversing in low tones; the lank cadaverous electrician whose duty was to send the lethal current through the condemned man's body, stood in a tiny alcove like a doorless telephone booth slightly behind and to the left of the chair. A screen obscured a doorway leading from the room, but as we took our seats in front I caught a fleeting glimpse of a white-enameled wheeled bier, a white sheet lying neatly folded on it. Beyond, I knew, the surgeon and the autopsy table were in readiness when the prison doctor had announced his verdict.

The big young Englishman went pale beneath his tropic tan as he surveyed the place; Remouard's square jaw set suddenly beneath his bristling square-cut beard; de Grandin's small, bright eyes roved quickly round the room, taking stock of the few articles of furniture; then, involuntarily his hand flew upward to tease the tightly waxed hairs of his mustache to a sharper point. These three, veterans of police routine, all more than once participants in executions, were fidgeting beneath the strain of waiting. As for me—if I came through without the aid of smelling-salts, I felt I should be lucky.

A light tap sounded on the varnished door communicating with the death cells. A soft, half-timid sort of tap it was, such as that a person unaccustomed to commercial life might give before attempting to enter an office.

The tap was not repeated. Silently, on well-oiled hinges, the door swung back, and a quartet halted on the threshold. To right and left were prison guards; between them stood the Red Priest arrayed in open shirt and loose black trousers, list slippers on his feet. As he came to a halt I saw that the right leg of the trousers had been slit up to the knee and flapped grotesquely round his ankle. The guards beside him held his elbows lightly, and another guard brought up the rear.

Pale, calm, erect, the condemned man betrayed no agitation, save by a sudden violent quivering of the eyelids, this perhaps, being due to the sudden flood of light in which he found himself. His great, sad eyes roved quickly round the room, not timorously, but curiously, finally coming to rest upon de Grandin. Then for an instant a flash showed in them, a lambent flash which died as quickly as it came.

Quickly the short march to the chair began. Abreast of us, the prisoner wrenched from his escorts, cleared the space between de Grandin and himself in one long leap, bent forward and spat into the little Frenchman's face.

Without a word or cry of protest the prison guards leaped on him, pinioned his elbows to his sides and rushed him at a staggering run across the short space to the chair.

De Grandin drew a linen kerchief from his cuff and calmly wiped the spittle from his cheek. "*Eh bien*," he murmured, "it seems the snake can spit, though justice has withdrawn his fangs, *n'est-ce pas ?*"

The prison warders knew their work. Straps were buckled round the prisoner's wrists, his ankles, waist. A leather helmetlike a football player's was clamped upon his head, almost totally obscuring his pale, deep-wrinkled face.

There was no clergyman attending. Grigor Bazarov was faithful to his compact with the Devil, even unto death. His pale lips moved: "God is tyranny and misery. God is evil. To me, then, Lucifer!" he murmured in a singsong chant.

The prison doctor stood before the chair, notepad in hand, pencil poised. The prisoner was breathing quickly, his shoulders fluttering with forced respiration. A deep, inhaling gulp, a quick, exhaling gasp—the shoulders slanted forward.

So did the doctor's pencil, as though he wrote. The thin-faced executioner, his quiet eyes upon the doctor's hands, reached upward. There was a crunching of levers, a sudden whirr, a whine, and the criminal's body started forward, lurching upward as though he sought to rise and burst from the restraining straps. As much as we could see of his pale

face grew crimson, like the face of one who holds his breath too long. The bony, claw-like hands were taut upon the chair arms, like those of a patient in the dentist's chair when the drill bites deeply.

A long, eternal moment of this posture, then the sound of grating metal as the switches were withdrawn, and the straining body in the chair sank limply back, as though in muscular reaction to fatigue.

Once more the doctor's pencil tilted forward, again the whirring whine. Again the body started up, tense, strained, all but hursting through the broad, strong straps which bound it to the chair. The right hand writhed and turned, thumb and forefinger meeting tip to tip, as though to take a pinch of snuff. Then absolute flaccidity as the current was shut off.

The prison doctor put his hook aside and stepped up to the chair. For something like a minute the main tube of his questing stethoscope explored the reddened chest exposed as he put back the prisoner's open shirt then: "I pronounce this man dead."

"*Mon Dieu*," exclaimed Renouard.

"For God's sake!" Ingraham muttered thickly.

I remained silent as the white-garbed orderlies took the limp form from the chair, wrapped it quickly in a sheet and trundled it away on the wheeled tier to the waiting autopsy table.

"I say," suggested Ingraham shakily, "suppose he ain't quite dead? It didn't seem to me —"

"*Tiens*, he will be thoroughly defunct when the surgeons' work is done," de Grandin told him calmly. "It was most interesting, was it not?"

His small eyes hardened as he saw the sick look on our faces. "Ah bah, you have the sympathy for him?" he asked almost accusingly. "For why? Were they not more merciful to him than he was to those helpless little boys he killed, those little boys whose throats he slit — or that poor woman whom he crucified? I damn think yes!"

20. The Wolf-Master

"*TIENS*, MY FRIENDS, I DAMN THINK there is devilment afoot!" de Grandin told us as we were indulging in a final cup of coffee in the breakfast room some mornings later.

"But no!" Renouard expostulated

"But yes!" his confrere insisted.

"Read it, my friend," he commanded, passing a folded copy of *The Journal* across the table to me. To Ingraham and Renouard he ordered: "Listen; listen and become astonished!"

MAGAZINE OF HORROR

MAGNATE'S MENAGERIE ON RAMPAGE

Beasts on Karmany Estate Break Cages and Pursue Intruder — Animals' Disappearance a Mystery.

I read aloud at his request.

"Early this morning keepers at the private zoo maintained by Winthrop Karmany, well known retired Wall Street operator, at his palatial estate near Raritan, were aroused by a disturbance among the animals. Karmany is said to have the finest, as well as what is probably the largest, collection of Siberian white wolves in captivity, and it was among these beasts the disturbance occurred.

"John Noles, 45, and Edgar Black, 30, caretakers on the Karmany estate, hastily left their quarters to ascertain the cause of the noise which they heard coming from the wolves' dens about 3:30 a.m. Running through the dark to the dens, they were in time to see what they took to be a man enveloped in a long, dark cloak, running at great speed toward the brick wall surrounding the animals' enclosure. They also noticed several wolves in hot pursuit of the intruder. Both declare that though the wolves had been howling and baying noisily a few minutes before, they ran without so much as a growl as they pursued the mysterious visitor.

"Arriving at the den the men were amazed to find the cage doors swinging open, their heavy locks evidently forced with a crowbar, and all but three of the savage animals at large.

"The strange intruder, with the wolves in close pursuit, was seen by Noles and Black to vault the surrounding wall, but all had disappeared in the darkness when the keepers reached the barrier. Citizens in the vicinity of the Karmany estate are warned to be on the lookout for the beasts, for though they had been in confinement several years and consequently have lost much of their native savagery, it is feared that unless they are speedily recaptured or voluntarily find their way back to their dens, they may revert to their original ferocity when they become hungry. Livestock may suffer from their depredations, and if they keep together and hunt in a pack even human beings are in danger, for all the beasts are unusually large and would make dangerous antagonists.

"This morning at daylight a posse of farmers, headed by members of the state constabulary, was combing the woods and fields

in search of the missing animals, but though every spot where wolves might be likely to congregate was visited, no trace of them was found. No one can be found who admits seeing any sign of the runaway wolves, nor have any losses of domestic animals been reported to the authorities.

"The manner in which the wolf pack seems to have vanished completely, as well as the identity of the man in black seen by the two keepers, and the reason which may have actuated him in visiting the Karmany menagerie are puzzling both the keepers and authorities. It has been intimated that the breaking of the cages may have been the vagary of a disordered mind. Certain insane persons have an almost uncontrollable aversion to the sight of caged animals, and it is suggested an escaped lunatic may have blundered into the Karmany zoo as he fled from confinement. If this is so it is quite possible that, seeing the confined beasts, he was suddenly seized with an insane desire to liberate them, and consequently forced the locks of their cages. The released animals seem to have been ungrateful, however, for both Noles and Black declare the mysterious man was obviously running for his life while the wolves pursued him in silent and ferocious determination. However, since no trace of the body has been found, nor any report of a man badly mauled by wolves made in the locality, it is supposed the unidentified man managed to escape. Meanwhile, the whereabouts of the wolf pack is causing much concern about the countryside.

"Karmany is at present occupying his southern place at Winter Haven, Fla., and all attempts to reach him have been unsuccessful at the time this issue goes to press."

"H'm, it's possible," I murmured as I put the paper down.

"Absolutely," Ingraham agreed.

"Of course; certainly," de Grandma nodded, then, abruptly: "What is?"

"Why—er—a lunatic *might* have done it," I returned. "Cases of zoophilia—"

"And of zoofiddlesticks!" the little Frenchman interrupted. "This was no insanatic's vagary, my friends; this business was well planned beforehand, though why it should be so we can not say. Still—"

"I don't care if he is at breakfast, I've got to see him!" a hysterically shrill voice came stridently from the hallway, and John Davison strode into the breakfast room, pushing the protesting Nora McGinnis from his

path. "Doctor de Grandin— Doctor Trowbridge— *she's gone!*" he sobbed as he half fell across the threshold.

"*Mon Dieu, so soon?*" de Grandin cried. "How was it, *mon pauvre?*"

Davison stared glassy-eyed from one of us to the other, his face working spasmodically, his hands clenched till it seemed the bones must surely crush.

"He stole her— he and his damned wolves!"

"Wolves? I say!" barked Ingraham.

"*Grand Dieu*— wolves!" Renouard exclaimed.

"*A-a-ah*— wolves? I begin to see the outlines of the scheme," de Grandin answered calmly. "I might have feared as much.

"Begin at the beginning, if you please, *Monsieur*, and tell us everything that happened. Do not leave out an incident, however trivial it may seem; in cases such as this there are no trifles. Begin, commence; we listen."

Young Davison exhaled a deep, half-sobbing breath and turned his pale face from de Grandin to Renouard, then back again.

"We— Alice and I— went riding this morning as we always do," he answered. "The horses were brought round at halfpast six, and we rode out the Albemarle Pike toward Boonesburg. We must have gone about ten miles when we turned off the highway into a dirt road. It's easier on the horses, and the riders, too, you know.

"We'd ridden on a mile or so, through quite a grove of pines, when it began to snow and the wind rose so sharply it cut through our jackets as if they had been summer-weight. I'd just turned round to lead the way to town when I heard Alice scream. She'd ridden fifty feet or so ahead of me, so she was that much behind when we turned.

"I wheeled my horse around, and there, converging on her from both sides of the road, were half a dozen great white wolves!

"I couldn't believe my eyes at first. The brutes were larger than any I'd ever seen, and though they didn't growl or make the slightest sound I could see their awful purpose in their gleaming eyes and flashing fangs. They hemmed my poor girl in on every side, and as I turned to ride to her, they gathered closer, crouching till their bellies almost touched the ground, and seemed to stop abruptly, frozen, waiting for some signal from the leader of the pack.

"I drove the spurs into my mare and laid the whip on her with all my might, but she balked and shied and reared, and all my urging couldn't force her on a foot.

"Then, apparently from nowhere, two more white beasts came charging



"The poor brute gave a screaming whinny and bolted."

through the woods and leaped at my mount's head. The poor brute gave a screaming whinny and bolted.

"I tugged at the bridle and sawed at her mouth, but I might have been a baby for all effect my efforts had. Twice I tried to roll out of the saddle, but she was fairly flying, and try as I would I didn't seem able to disengage myself. We'd reached the Pike and traveled half a mile or so toward town before I finally brought her to a halt.

"Then I turned back, but at the entrance to the lane she balked again, and nothing I could do would make her leave the highway. I dismounted and hurried down the lane on foot, but it was snowing pretty hard by then, and I couldn't even be sure when I'd reached the place where Alice was attacked. At any rate, I couldn't find a trace of her or of her horse."

He paused a moment breathlessly, and de Grandin prompted softly:

"And this 'he' to whom you referred when you first came in, *Monsieur*?"

"Grigor Bazarov!" the young man answered, and his features quivered in a nervous tic. "I recognized him instantly!"

"As I rushed down that lane at break-neck speed on my ungovernable horse I saw—distinctly, gentlemen—a human figure standing back among the pines. It was Grigor Bazarov, and he stood between the trees, waving his hands like a conductor leading an orchestra. Without a spoken syllable *he was directing that pack of wolves*. He set them after Alice and ordered them to stop when they'd surrounded her. He set them on me, and made them leap at my horse's head without actually fleshing their teeth in her and without attempting to drag me from the saddle—which they could easily have done. Then, when he'd worked his plan and made my mare halt, he called them back into the woods. It was Alice he was after, and he took her as easily as a shepherd cuts a wether from the flock with trained sheep-dogs!"

"How is this?" de Grandin questioned sharply. "You say it was Grigor Bazarov. How could you tell? You never saw him."

"No, but I've heard you tell of him, and Alice had described him, too. I recognized those great, sad eyes of his, and his mummy-wrinkled face. I tell you—"

"But Bazarov is dead," I interrupted. "We saw him die last week—all of us. They electrocuted him in the penitentiary at Trenton, and—"

"And while he was all safely lodged in jail he broke into this house and all hut made away with Mademoiselle Alice," de Grandin cut in sharply. "You saw him with your own two eyes, my Trowbridge. So did Renouard and Monsieur Hiji. Again, while still in jail he murdered the poor Hornsby, and all hut killed the good Costello. The evidence is undisputed, and—"

"I know, but he's dead, now!" I insisted.

"There is a way to tell," de Grandin answered. "Come, let us go."

"Go? Where?"

"To the cemetery, of course. I would look in the grave of this one who can be in jail and in your house at the same time, and kill a gendarme in the street while safely under lock and key. Come, we waste our time, my friends."

We drove to the county court house, and de Grandin was doseted with the Recorder Glassford in his chambers a few minutes. "*Tres bon*," he told us as he reappeared. "I have the order for the exhumation. Let us make haste."

The early morning snow had stopped, but a thin veneer of leaden clouds obscured the sky, and the winter sun shone through them with a pale, half-hearted glow as we wheeled along the highway toward the graveyard. Only people of the poorer class buried their dead in Willow Hills; only funeral directors of the less exclusive sort sold lots or grave-space there. Bazarov's unmarked grave was in the least expensive section of the poverty-stricken burying-ground, one short step higher than the Potter's Field.

The superintendent and two overalled workmen waited at the graveside, for de Grandin had telephoned the cemetery office as soon as he obtained the order for the exhumation. Glancing perfunctorily at the little Frenchman's papers, the superintendent nodded to the Polish laborers. "Git goin'," he commanded tersely, "an' make it snappy."

It was dismal work watching them heave lumps of frosty clay from the grave. The earth was frozen almost stony-hard, and the picks struck on it with a hard, metallic sound. At length, however, the dull, reverberant thud of steel on wood warned us that the task was drawing to a close. A pair of strong web straps were lowered, made fast to the rough box enclosing the casket, and at a word from the superintendent the men strained at the thongs, dragging their weird bruden to the surface. A pair of pick-handles were laid across the open grave and the rough box rested on them. Callously, as one who does such duties every day, the superintendent wrenched the box-lid off, and the laborers laid it by the grave. Inside lay the casket, a cheap affair of chestnut covered with shoddy broadcloth, the tinny, imitation-silver nameplate on its lid already showing a dull, brown-blue discoloration.

Snap! The fastenings which secured the casket lid were thrown back; the superintendent lifted the panel and tossed it to the frozen ground.

Head resting on the sateen rayon pillow, hands folded on his breast, Grigor Bazarov lay before us and gave us stare for stare. The mortician who attended him had lacked the skill or inclination to do a thorough job, and despite the intense cold of the weather putrefaction had made progress. The dead man's mouth was slightly open, a quarter-inch or so of purple, blood-gorged tongue protruding from his lips as though in low derision; the lids were partly raised from his great eyes, and though these had the sightless glaze of death, it seemed to me some subtle mockery lay in them.

I shuddered at the sight despite myself, but I could not forbear the gibe: "Well, is he dead?" I asked de Grandin.

"*Comme un mouton*," he answered, in nowise disconcerted.

"Restore him to his bed, if you will be so good, *Monsieur*," he added to the superintendent, "and should you care to smoke—" A flash of green showed momentarily as a treasury note changed hands, and the cemetery overseer grinned.

"Thanks," he acknowledged. "Next time you want to look at one of 'em, don't forget we're always willing to oblige."

"Yes, he is dead," the Frenchman murmured thoughtfully as we walked slowly toward the cemetery gate, "dead like a herring, yet—"

"Dead or not," John Davisson broke in, and his words were synopocated by the chattering of his teeth, "dead or not, sir, the man we just saw in that coffin was the man I saw beside the lane this morning. No one could fail to recognize that face!"

21. White Horror

"HERE'S A SPECIAL DELIVERY LETTER for Mither Davisson, come whilst yez wuz out, sor," Nora McGinnis announced as we entered the house. "Will ye be afither havin' the' tur-rkey or th' roast fer dinner tonight, an' shall I make th' salad wid tomatoes or asparagus?"

"Turkey, by all means, he is a noble hird," de Grandin answered for me, and tomatoes with the salad, if you please, *ma petite*."

The big Irishwoman favored him with an affectionate smile as she retired kitchenward, and young Davisson slit the envelope of the missive, she had handed him.

For a moment he perused it with wide-set, unbelieving eyes, then handed it to me, his features quivering once again with nervous tic.

John, Darling:

When you get this I shall be on my way to fulfil the destiny prepared for me from the beginning of the world. Do not seek to follow me, nor think of me, save as you might think kindly of one who died, for I am dead to you. I have forever given up all thought of marriage to you or any man, and I release you from your engagement. Your ring will be delivered to you, and that you may some day put it on the finger of a girl who can return the love you give is the hope of

ALICE.

"I can't—I won't believe she means it!" the young man cried. "Why,

Alice and I have known each other since we were little kids; we've been in love since she first put her hair up, and—"

"*Tiens*, my friend," de Grandio interrupted as he gazed at the message, "have you by chance spent some time out in the country?"

"Eh?" answered Davisson, amazed at the irrelevant question.

"Your hearing is quite excellent, I think. Will you not answer me?"

"Why—er—yes, of course, I've been in the country—I spent practically all my summers on a farm when I was a lad, but—"

"*Tres bon*," the little Frenchman laughed. "Consider: Did not you see the wicked Bazarov urge on his wolves to take possession of your sweet-heart? But certainly. And did he not forbear to harm you, being satisfied to drive you from the scene while he kidnapped Mademoiselle Alice? Of course. And could he not easily have had his wolf-pack drag you from your horse and slay you? You have said as much yourself. Very well, then; recall your rural recollections, if you will:

"You have observed the farmer as he takes his cattle to the butcher. Does he take the trouble to place his cow in leading strings? By no means. He puts the little, so weak calf, all destined to be veal upon the table in a little while, into a wagon, and drives away to market. And she, the poor, distracted mother-beast, she trots along behind, asking nothing but to keep her little baby-calf in sight. Lead her? *Pardieu*, ropes of iron could not drag her from behind the tumbril in which her offspring rides to execution! Is it not likely so in this case also? I damo think yes.

"This never-to-be-sufficiently-anathematized stealer of women holds poor Mademoiselle Alice in his clutch. He spares her *fiance*. Perhaps he spares him only as the cruel, playful pussy-cat forbears to kill the mouse outright; at any rate, he spares him. For why? *Pardieu*, because by leaving Monsieur Jean free he still allows poor Mademoiselle Alice one little, tiny ray of hope; with such vile subtlety as only his base wickedness can plan, he holds her back from black despair and suicide that he may force her to his will by threats against the man she loves. *Sacre nom d'un artichaut*, I shall say yes! Certainly, of course."

"You mean—be'll make her go with him—leave me—by threats against my life?" young Davisson faltered.

"*Précisément, mon vieux*. He has no need to drug her now with *sco-polamin apomorphin*; he holds her in a stronger thrall. Yes, it is entirely likely."

He folded the girl's note between his slim, white hands, regarding it idly for a moment; then, excitedly: "Tell me, Monsieur Jean, did Mademoiselle Alice, by any chance, know something of telegraphy?"

"Eh? Why, yes. When we were kids we had a craze for it—had wires strung between our houses with senders and receivers at each end, and used to rouse each other at all sorts of hours to tap a message—"

"Houree, the Evil One is circumvented! Regardez-vous."

Holding the letter to the study desk-lamp, he tapped its bottom margin with his finger. Invisible except against the light, a series of light scratches, as though from a pin-point or dry pen, showed on the paper:

— — — — —

"You can read him?" he asked anxiously. "Me, I understand the international, but this is in American Morse, and —"

"Of course I can," young Davissco broke in. "'Jooes' Mill,' it says. Good Lord, why didn't I think of that?"

"Ah? And this mill of Monsieur jooes —"

"Is an old ruin several miles from Boonesburg. No one's occupied it since I can remember, but it can't be more than three miles from the place where we met the wolves, and —"

"*Eh bien*, if that be so, why do we sit here like five sculptured figures on the Arc de Triomphe? Come, let us go at once, my friends. Trowbridge, Renouard, Friend Hiji, and you, Friend Jeao, prepare yourselves for service in the cold. Me, I shall telephone the good Costello for the necessary implements.

"*Out-da, Messieurs les Loups*, I think that we shall give you the party of surprise—we shall feed you that which will make your bellies ache most villainously!"

It was something like a half-hour later when the police car halted at the door. "It's kind o' irreg'lar, sor," Sergeant Costello announced as he lugged several heavy satchels up the steps with the aid of two patrolmen, "but I got permission fer th' loao. Seems like you got a good stand-in down to headquarters."

The valises opened, he drew forth three submachetee guns, each with an extra drum of cartridges, and two riot guns, weapons similar to the automatic shotgun, but heavier in construction and firing shells loaded with much heavier shot.

"You and Friend Jean will use the shotguns, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin told me. "Renouard, Ingraham and I will handle the quick-firers. Come, prepare yourselves at once. Heavy clothing, but no long coats; we shall oeed leg-room before the evening ends."

I fished a set of ancient hunting-togs out of my wardrobe—thick

trousers of stout corduroy, a pair of high lace boots, a heavy sweater and suede jerkin, finally a leather cap with folds that huddled underneath the chin. A few minutes' search unearthed another set for Davisson, and we joined the others in the hallway. De Grandin was resplendent in a leather aviation suit; Renouard had slipped three sweaters on above his waistcoat and banded the bottoms of his trousers tight about his ankles with stout linen twine; Ingraham was arrayed in a suit of corduroys which had seen much better days, though not recently.

"Are we prepared?" de Grandin asked. "*Tres bon*. Let us go."

The bitter cold of the afternoon had given way to slightly warmer weather, but before we had traversed half a mile the big, full, yellow moon was totally obscured by clouds, and shortly afterward the air was filled with flying snowflakes and tiny, cutting grains of hail which rattled on the windshield and stung like whips when they blew into our faces.

About three-quarters of a mile from the old mill I had to stop my motor for the road was heavy with new-fallen snow and several ancient trees had blown across the trail, making further progress impossible.

"*Eh bien*, it must be on foot from now on, it seems," de Grandin murmured as he clambered from the car. "Very well; one consents when one must. Let us go; there is no time to lose."

The road wound on, growing narrower and more uneven with each step. Thick ranks of waving, black-boughed pines marched right to the border of the trail on either side, and through their swaying limbs the storm-wind howled eerily, while the very air seemed colder with a sharper, harder chill, and the wan and ghastly light which sometimes shines on moonless, snow-filled winter nights, seemed filled with creeping, shifting phantom-shapes which stalked us as a wolf-pack stalks a stag.

"*Morbleu*, I so not like this place, me," Renouard declared. "It has an evil smell."

"I think so, too, *mon vieux*," de Grandin answered. "Three times already I have all but fired at nothing. My nerves are not so steady as I thought."

"Oh, keep your tails up," Ingraham comforted. "It's creepy as a Scottish funeral here, but I don't see anything—"

"*Ha*, do you say it? Then look yonder, if you will, and tell me what it is you do not see, my friend," de Grandin interrupted.

Loping silently across the snow, themselves a mere shade darker than the fleecy covering of the ground, came a pack of great, white wolves, green-yellow eyes aglint with savagery, red tongues lolling from their

mouths as they drew nearer through the pines, then suddenly deployed like soldiers at command, and, their cordon formed, sank to the snow and sat there motionless.

"*Cher Dieu*," Renouard said softly. "It is the pack of beasts which made away with Mademoiselle Alice, and—"

A movement stirred within the pack. A brute rose from its haunches, took a tentative step forward, then sank down again, belly to the snow, and lay there panting, its glaring eyes fixed hungrily upon us.

And as the leader moved, so moved the pack. A score of wolves were three feet nearer us, for every member of the deadly circle had advanced in concert with the leader.

I stole a quick glance at de Grandin. His little round blue eyes were glaring fiercely at those of any of the wolves; beneath his little blond mustache his lips were drawn back savagely, showing his small, white, even teeth in a snarl of hate and fury.

Another rippling movement in the wolf-pack, and now the silence crashed, and from the circle there went up such pandemonium of hellish howls as I had never heard; not even in the worst of nightmares. I had a momentary vision of red mouths and gleaming teeth and shaggy, gray-white fur advancing toward me in a whirlwind rush, then:

"Give fire!" de Grandin shouted.

And now the wolf-pack's savage battlecry was drowned out by another roar as de Grandin, Ingraham and Renouard, back touching back, turned loose the venom of their submachine guns. Young Davisson and I, too, opened fire with our shotguns, not taking aim, but pumping the mechanisms frenziedly and firing point-blank into the faces of the charging wolves.

How long the battle lasted I have no idea, but I remember that at last I felt de Grandin's hand upon my arm and heard him shouting in my ear: "Cease firing, Friend Trowbridge; there is no longer anything to shoot. *Parbleu*, if wolves have souls, I damn think hell is full with them tonight!"

22. The Crimson Clue

HE TURNED ABRUPTLY TO RENOUARD: "*Allez au feu, mon brave*," he cried, "*pour la patrie!*"

We charged across the intervening patch of snow-filled clearing, and more than once de Grandin or Renouard or Ingraham paused in his stride to spray the windows of the tumbledown old house with a stream

of lead. But not a shot replied, nor was there any sign of life as we approached the doorless doorway.

"Easy on," Ingraham counseled. "They may be lyin' doggo, waitin' for a chance—"

"But no," de Grandin interrupted. "Had that been so, they surely would not have missed the chance to shoot us to death a moment ago—we were a perfectly defined target against the snow, and they had the advantage of cover. Still, a milligram of caution is worth a double quintal of remorse; so let us step warily.

"Renouard and I will take the lead. Friend Trowbridge, you and Friend Jean walk behind us and flash your searchlights forward, and well above our heads. That way, if we are ambushed, they will shoot high and give us opportunity to return their fire. Friend Hugi, do you bring up the rear and keep your eyes upon the ground which we have traversed. Should you see aught which looks suspicious, shoot first and make investigation afterward. I do not wish that we should die tonight."

Accordingly, in this close formation, we searched the old house from its musty cellar to its drafty attic, but nowhere was there any hint of life or recent occupancy until, as we forced back the sagging door which barred the entrance to the old grainbins, we noted the faint, half-tangible aroma of *narcisse noir*.

"Alice!" John Davison exclaimed. "She's been here—I recognize the scent!"

"U'm?" de Grandin murmured thoughtfully. "Advance your light a trifle nearer, if you please, Friend Trowbridge."

I played the flashlight on the age-bleached casing of the door. There, fresh against the wood's flat surface were three small pits, arranged triangularly. A second group of holes, similarly spaced, were in the hand-hewn planking of the door, exactly opposite those which scarred the jamb.

"Screw-holes," de Grandin commented, "and on the outer side. You were correct, Friend Jean; your nose and heart spoke truly. This place has been the prison of your love—here are the marks where they made fast the lock and hasp to hold her prisoner—but *Adieu*, the bird is flown; the cage deserted."

Painstakingly as a paleographer might scan a palimpsest, he searched the little, wood-walled cubicle, flashing his search-light's darting ray on each square inch of aged planking. "*Ah-Ah?*" he asked of no one in particular as the flashlight struck into a corner, revealing several tiny smears of scarlet on the floor.

"*Morbleu!* Blood?" Renouard exclaimed. "Can it be that—"

De Grandin threw himself full length upoo the floor, his little, round blue eyes a scant three inches from the row of crimson stains. "Blood? *Non!*" he answered as he finished his examination. "It is the mark of *parade pour les levres*, and unless I do mistake—"

"You mean lipstick?" I interrupted. "What in the world—"

"*Zut!*" he cut me short. "You speak too much my friend." To Davisson:

"See here, Friend Jean, is not some system of design in this? Is it not—"

"Of course it is!" the young man answered sharply. "It's another telegraphic message, like the one she sent us in the letter. Can't you see? 'Dash, dash; dot, dash; dot, dot, dot; dot, dash; dash, dot—' He read the code through quickly.

De Grandin looked at him with upraised brows. "*Exactement*," he nodded, "and that means—"

"*M-a-c-a-n-d-r-e-u-s s-i-e*—" Davisson spelled the message out, then paused, shook his head in puzzlement, and once again essayed the task.

"I can't get any sense from it," he finally confessed. "That's what it spells, no doubt of it, but what the devil—"

"I say, old chap, go over it once more," asked Ingraham. "I may be blotto, but—"

Crash! The thunderous detonation shook the floor beneath us and a heavy beam came hurtling from the ceiling, followed by a cataract of splintered planks and rubble.

Crash! A second fulmination smashed the wooded wall upoo our right and a mass of shattered brick and timber poured into the room.

"*Bombes d'air!*" Renouard cried wildly. "Down—down, my friends; it is the only way to—" His warning ended in a choking grunt as a third explosion ripped the cover off our hiding-place and a blinding pompom of live flame flashed in our eyes.

I felt myself hurled bodily against the farther wall, felt the crushing impact as I struck the mortised planks, and then I felt no more.

"Trowbridge, my friend, my good, brave comrade, do you survive, have you been killed to death? *Mordieu*, say that you live, my old one!" I heard de Grandin's voice calling from immeasurable distance, and slowly realized he held my head upon his shoulder while with frantic hands he rubbed snow on my brow.

"Oh, I'm all right, I guess," I answered weakly, then sank again in comforting oblivion.

When next I struggled back to consciousness, I found myself on my

own surgery table, de Grandin busy with a phial of smelling-salts, a glass of aromatic spirit on the table, and a half-filled tumbler of cognac next to it. "Thanks be to God you are yourself once more!" he exclaimed fervently, handed me the water and ammonia and drained the brandy glass himself. "*Pardieu*, my friend, I thought that we should surely lose you!" he continued as he helped me to a chair.

"You had a close squeak no doubt of it," Ingraham agreed.

"What happened?" I demanded weakly.

De Grandin fairly ground his teeth in rage. "They made a foolishness of us," he told me. "While we were busy with their *sacre* wolves they must have been escaping, and the thunder of our guns drowned out the whirring of their motors. Then, when we were all safe and helpless in the house, they circled back and dropped the hand grenades upon us. Luckily for us they had no aerial torpedoes, or we should now be practising upon the harp. As it is—" he raised his shoulders in a shrug.

"B—but, you mean they had a *plane*?" I asked, amazed.

"*Ha*, I shall say as much!" he answered. "Nor did they stop to say a 'by-your-leave' when they obtained it. This very night, an hour or so before we journeyed to that thirty-thousand-times-accursed mill of Monsieur Jones, two men descended suddenly upon the hangars at New Bristol. A splendid new amphibian lay in the bay, all ready to be drawn into her shed. The people at the airport are much surprised to see her suddenly take flight, but—aviators are all crazy, else they would remain on land, and who shall say what form their latest madness takes? It was some little time before the truth was learned. Then it was too late.

"Stretched cold upon the runway of the hangar they found the pilot and his mechanic. Both were shot dead, yet not a shot was heard. The miscreants had used silencers upon their guns, no doubt.

"*Tiens*, at any rate, they had not stopped at murder, and they had made off with the plane, had landed it upon the frozen millpond, then sailed away, almost—but not quite, thank God!—leaving us as dead as we had left their guardian wolves."

"*Hélas*, and we shall never overtake them!" Renouard said mournfully. "It is too obvious. They chose the amphibian plane that they might put to sea and be picked up by some ship which waited; and where they may be gone we can not say. There is no way of telling, for—"

"Hold hard, old thing; I think perhaps there is!" the Englishman broke in. "When Trowhrtdge toppled over it knocked the thought out of my head, but I've an idea we may trace 'em. I'll pop off to the cable office

and send a little tracer out. We ought to get some solid information by tomorrow."

We were still at breakfast the next morning when the young man from the cable office came. "Mr. In-gra-ham here?" he asked.

"Don't say it like that, young feller, me lad, it's Ingraham — 'In' as in 'inside,' and 'graham' as in hiscuit, you know," returned the Englishman with a grin as he held out his hand for the message.

Hastily he read it to himself, then aloud to us:

No strangers seeking access to the bush through here but French report a hundred turned back from Konakri stop unprecedented number of arrivals at Monrovia stop investigation under way

SYMME\$

Supt

"*Tres bon*," de Grandin nodded. "Now, if you will have the goodness to translate — " he paused with brows raised interrogatively.

"Nothin' simpler, old thing," the Englishman responded. "You see, it was like this:

"Way up in the back country of Sierra Leone, so near the boundary line of French Guinea that the French think it's British territory and the British think it's French, an old goop named McAndrews got permission to go diggin' some twenty years ago. He was a dour old Scotsman, mad as a dingo dog, they say, but a first-rate archeologist. There were some old Roman ruins near the border, and this Johnny had the idea he'd turn up something never in the books if he kept at it long enough. So he built a *pukka* camp and settled down to clear the jungle off, but fever beat his schedule and they planted the old cove in one of his own trenches.

"That ended old Mac's diggin', but his camp's still there. I passed it less than five years ago, and stopped there overnight. The natives say the old man's ghost hangs around the place, and shun it like the plague — haven't even stolen anything."

"Ah?" de Grandin murmured. "And — "

"Oh, quite, old dear. A big 'and'. That's what got the massive intellect workin', don't you know. There's a big natural clearin' near MacAndrews' and a pretty fair-sized river. The place is so far inland nobody ever goes there unless he has to, and news — white man's news,

I mean—is blessed slow gettin' to the coast. Could anything be sweeter for our Russian friends' jamboree?

"Irak is under British rule today, and any nonsense in that neighborhood would bring the police sniffin' round. The Frenchmen in Arabia don't stand much foolishness, so any convocation of the Devil-Worshippers is vetoed in advance so far as that locality's concerned. But *what about MacAndrew's?* They could plant and harvest the finest crop of merry young hell you ever saw out there and no one be the wiser. But they've got to get there. That's the blighted difficulty, me lad. Look here—"

He drew a pencil and notebook from his pocket and blocked out a rough map: "Here's Sierra Leone; here's French Guinea; here's Liberia. Get it? Our people in Freetown have to be convinced there's some good reason why before they'll pass a stranger to the bush country; so do the French. But Liberia—any man, black, white, yellow or mixed, who lands there with real money in his hand can get unlimited concessions to go hunting in the back country, and no questions asked.

"There you are, old bean. When Davisson decoded that message on the floor last night it hit me like a brick. The gal had told us where she was in the letter; now, she takes a chance we'll go to Jones' Mill and starts to write a message on the floor. They've talked before her, and she takes her lipstick and starts to write her destination down—'MacAndrews, Sierra Leone'—but only gets 'MacAndrews' and the first three letters of 'Sierra' down when they come for her and she has to stop. That's the way I've figured it—it's great to have a brain like mine!

"Now, if they've really picked MacAndrews' old camp for their party, there'll be a gatherin' of the clans out there. And the visitors will have to come overland or enter through Freetown, one of the French ports or Liberia. That's reasonin', old top.

"So I cabled Freetown to see if any one's been tryin' to bootleg himself through the lines, or if there'd been much sudden immigration through the French ports. You have the answer. All these coves will have to do is strike cross-country through the bush and—"

"And we shall apprehend them!" Renouard exclaimed delightedly.

"Right-o, dear sir and fellow policeman," the Englishman returned. "I'm bookin' passage for West Africa this mornin', and—"

"Book two," Renouard cut in. "This excavation of Monstur MacAndrews, it is near the border; me, I shall be present with a company of Senegalese gendarmes and—"

"And with me, *pardieu*! Am I to have no pleasure?" broke in Jules de Grandin.

"Me, too," John Davisson asserted. "If they've got Alice, I must be there, too."

"You might as well book passage for five," I finished. "I've been with you so far, and I'd like to see the finish of this business. Besides, I owe 'em something for that bomb they dropped on me last night."^o

23. Pursuit

THERE WAS NO SCARCITY of offered labor when we debartered at Monrovia. A shouting, sweating, jostling throng of black boys crowded round us, each member of the crowd urging his own peculiar excellence as a haggage-carrier in no uncertain terms. Foremost—and most vocal—was a young man in long and much soiled nightgown, red slippers and very greasy turboosh. "Carry luggage, sar? Carry him good; not trust dam' hush nigger!" he asseverated, worming with serpentine agility through the pressing crowd of volunteers and plucking Ingraham's sleeve solicitously.

"Right, carry on, young feller," the Englishman returned, kicking his kn hag toward the candidate for portership.

"Hi-yar, this way — grah marster's duffle!" the favored one called out, and from the crowd some half-dozen nondescript individuals sprang forward, shouldered our gear and, led by the man Ingraham had engaged, preceded us at a shuffling jog-trot up the winding street toward the apology for a hotel.

Evidently Ingraham was familiar with conventions, for when we had arrived at our hotel he made no effort to distribute largess among the porters, but beckoned to the head man to remain in our room while the remainder of the gang dispersed themselves in such shade as offered in the street outside, awaiting the emergence of their leader.

The moment the door closed a startling transformation came over our chief porter. The stooping, careless bearing which marked his every movement fell from him like a cloak, his shoulders straightened back, his chin went up, and heels clicked together, he stood erectly at attention before Ingraham. "Sergeant Bendigo reporting, sar," he announced.

"At ease," commanded Ingraham. Then: "Did you go out there?"

"Yes, O Hiji, even as you ordered, so I did. Up to the place where all

* Here ended part five in the June 1932 *WEIRD TALES*.

of the great waters break in little streams I went, and there at the old camp where ghosts and djinn and devils haunt the night I found the tribesmen making *poro*. Also, O Hiji, I think the little leopards are at large again, for in the night I heard their drums, and once I saw them dancing round a fire while something — *awâ*, an unclean thing, I think — stewed within their pots. Also, I heard the leopard scream, but when I looked I saw no beast, only three black feller walking through a jungle path."

"U'm? Any white men there?" demanded Ingraham.

"Plenty lot, sar. No jolly end. Plenty much white feller, also other feller with dark skin, not white like Englishman or French, not black like hush boy or brown like Leont, but funny-lookin' feller, some yeller, some brown, some white, but dark and big-nosed, like Jewish trading man. Some, I think, are Hindoos, like I see sometime in Freetown. They come trekking long time through the jungle from Monrovia, ten, twenty, maybe thirty at once, with Liberian bush boys for guide, and —"

"All right, get on with it," Ingraham prompted sharply.

"Then make killing palaver, Hiji," the young man told him earnestly, "Those hush boys come as guides; but *they not return*. They start for home, but something happen — I saw one speared from amhush. I think those white men put bad thoughts in hush men's heads. Very, very bad palaver, sar."

"What's doing up at MacAndrews'?"

"*Hou!* Bush nigger from all parts of the forest work like slaves; all time they dig and chop. Clear off the jungle, dig' up old stones where ghosts are buried. I think there will be trouble there."

"No doubt of it," the Englishman concurred. Then: "Tell me, O sergeant man, was there among these strangers some one woman of uncommon beauty whom they guarded carefully, as though a prisoner, yet with reverence, as though a queen?"

"Allah!" exclaimed the sergeant, rolling up his eyes ecstatically.

"Never mind the religious exercises. Did you see the woman?"

"*Wâh*, a woman, truly, Hiji, but a woman surely such as never was before. Her face is like the moon at evening, her walk like that of the gazelle, and from her lips drips almond-honey. Her voice is like the dripping of the rain in thirsty places, and her eyes — *bismillah*, when she weeps the tears are sapphires. She has the first-bloom of the lotus on her cheek, and —"

"Give over, you've been reading Hafiz or Eltonor Glyn, young feller. Who's the leader of this mob?"

"*Wallah*"—Sergeant Bendigo passed his fingers vertically across his lips and spat upon the floor—"he is called Bazarri, Hiji, and verily he is the twin of Satan, the stoned and the rejected. A face of which the old and wrinkled monkey well might be ashamed is his, with great, sad eyes that never change their look, whatever they behold. *Waa*, in Allah's glorious name I take refuge from the rejected one—"

"All right; all right, take refuge all you please, but get on with your report," Ingraham cut in testily. "You say he has the natives organized?"

"Like the little blades of grass that come forth in the early rains, O Hiji. Their spears are numerous as the great trees of the forest, and everywhere they range the woods lest strangers come upon them. They killed two members of the Mendi who came upon them unawares, and I was forced to sleep in trees like any of the monkey people; for to be caught near MacAndrews' is to enter into Paradise—and the cooking-pot."

"Eh? The devil! They're practising cannibalism?"

"Thou sayest."

"Who—"

"The white man of the evil, wrinkled face; he whom they call Bazarri; he has appointed it. Also he gives them much trade gin. I think there will be shooting before long; spears will fly as thick as gnats about the carcass—*baa*, and bullets, too. The little guns which sutter will laugh the laugh of death, and the bayonets will go *bang*! as we drive them home to make those dam' hush feller know our lord the Emperor-King is master still."

"Right you are," the Englishman returned, and there was something far from pleasant at the corners of his mouth as he smiled at Sergeant Bendigo.

"Gentlemen"—he turned to us—"this is my sergeant and my right-hand man. We can accept all that he tells us as the truth.

"Sergeant, these men come from far away to help us hunt this evil man of whom you tell me."

The sergeant drew himself erect again and tendered us a grave salute. His slightly flaring nostrils and smooth, brown skin announced his negroid heritage, but the thin-lipped mouth, the straight, sleek hair and finely modeled hands and feet were pure Arah, while the gleaming, piercing eyes and quick, cruel smile were equally pure devil. De Grandin knew him for a knifed spirit instantly.

"*Tieu, mon brave*, it is a fine thing you have done, this discovering of their devil's nest," he complimented as he raised his hand in

answer to the sergeant's military courtesy. "You think we yet shall come to grips with them?"

Bendigo's eyes shone with anticipation and delight, his white teeth flashed between his hack-drawn lips. "May Allah spare me till that day!" he answered. It was a horn killer speaking, a man who took as aptly to the deadly risks of police work as ever duckling took to water.

"Very well, Sergeant," Ingraham ordered; "take the squad and hook it for Freetown as fast as you can; we'll be along in a few days."

Bendigo saluted again, executed a perfect about-face and marched to the door. Once in the hotel corridor he dropped his military bearing and slouched into the smoshine where his confreres waited.

"Stout feller, that," Ingraham remarked. "I sent him a wire to go native and pop up to MacAndrews' and nose round, then follow the trail overland to Monrovia, pickin' up what information he could en route. It's a holy certainty nothing happened on the way he didn't see, too."

"But isn't there a chance some of that gaog he called to help him with our luggage may give the show away?" I asked. "They didn't seem any too choice a crowd to me."

Ingraham smiled, a trifle bleakly. "I hardly think so," he replied. "You see, they're all members of Bendigo's platoon. He brought 'em here to help him carry on."

De Grandin and Reouard went on to Dakar, while Ingraham, John Davissoo and I took packet north to Freetown.

Our expedition quickly formed. A hundred frontier policemen with guns and bayonets, five Lewis guns in charge of expert operators, with Ingraham and Bendigo in command, set out in a small wood-burning steamer toward Falaha. We halted overnight at the old fortress towo, camping underneath the loopholed walls, then struck out overland toward the French border.

The rains had not commenced, nor would they for a month or so, and the *Narmattan*, the ceaseless northwest wind blowing up from the Sahara, swept across the land like a steady draft from a holler room. The heat was bad, the humidity worse; it was like walking through a superheated hothouse as we beat our way along the jungle trails, oow marching through comparatively clear forest, oow hacking at the trailing undergrowth, or pausing at the mud-bank of some sluggish stream to force a passage while our native porters beat the turbid water with sticks to keep the crocodiles at a respectful distance.

"We're almost there," Ingraham announced one evening as we sat

before his tent, imbibing whisky mixed with tepid water, "and I don't like the look of things a bit."

"How's that?" I asked. "It seems extremely quiet to me; we've scarcely seen —"

"That's it! We haven't seen a bloomin' thing, or heard one, either. Normally these woods are crawlin' with natives—Timni or Sulima, even if the beastly Mendi don't show up. This trip we've scarcely seen a one. Not only that, they should be gossipin' on the *lokadi*—the jungle telegraph-drum, you know—tellin' the neighbors miles away that we're headin' north by east, but—damn it; I don't *like* it!"

"Oh, you're getting nerves," Davisson told him with a laugh. "I'm going to turn in. Good-night."

Ingraham watched him moodily as he walked across the little clearing to his tent beneath an oil-palm tree. "Silly ass," he muttered. "If he knew this country as I do he'd be singin' a different sor o' chanty. Nerves—good Lord!"

He reached inside his open tunic for tobacco pouch and pipe, but stiffened suddenly, like a pointer coming on a covey of quail. Next instant he was on his feet, the Browning flashing from the bolster strapped against his leg, and a savage spurt of flame stabbed through the darkness.

Like a prolongation of the pistol's roar there came a high-pitched, screaming cry, and something big and black and bulky crashed through the palm-tree's fronds, hurtling to the earth right in Davisson's path.

We raced across the clearing, and Ingraham stooped and struck a match. "Nerves, eh?" he asked sarcastically, as the little spot of orange flame disclosed a giant native, smeared with oil and naked save for a narrow belt of leopard hide bound round his waist and another band of spotted fur wound round his temples. On each hand he wore a glove of leopard skin, and fixed to every finger was a long, hooked claw of sharpened iron. One blow from those spiked gloves and any one sustaining it would have had the flesh ripped from his bones.

"Nerves, eh?" the Englishman repeated. "Jolly good thing for you I had 'em, young feller me lad, and that I saw this beggar crouchin' in the tree—"

"The devil! You would, eh?" The inert native, bleeding from a bullet in his thigh, had regained the breath the tumble from the tree knocked from him, raised on his elbow and struck a slashing blow at Ingraham's legs. The Englishman swung his pistol barrel with crushing force upon the native's head; then, as Bendigo and half a dozen Houssas hurried up:



"Something big, black and bulky
crashed through the palm-tree's
fronds."

"O Sergeant Man, prepare a harness for this beast and keep him safely till his spirit has returned."

The sergeant saluted, and in a moment the prisoner was securely trussed with cords.

Some twenty minutes later Bendigo stood at Ingraham's tent, a light of pleased anticipation shining in his eyes. "Prisoner's spirit has come back, O Hiji," he reported.

"Good, bring him here.

"I see you, Leopard Man," he opened the examination when they brought the fettered captive to us.

The prisoner eyed him sullenly, but volunteered no answer.

"Who sent you through the woods to do this evil thing?" Ingraham pursued.

"The leopard hates and kills; he does not talk," the man replied.

"Oko!" the Englishman returned grimly. "I think this leopard will talk, and be jolly glad to. Sergeant, build a fire!"

Sergeant Bendigo had evidently anticipated this, for dry sticks and kindling were produced with a celerity nothing short of marvelous.

"I hate to do this, Trowbridge," Ingraham told me, "but I've got to get the truth out of this blighter, and get it in a hurry. Go to your tent if you think you can't stand it."

The captive howled and beat his head against the earth and writhed as though he were an eel upon the harps when they thrust his bare soles into the glowing embers; but not until the stench of burning flesh rose sickeningly upon the still night air did he shake his head from side to side in token of surrender.

"Now, then, who sent you?" Ingraham demanded when the prisoner's blistered feet were thrust into a canvas hucket full of water. "Speak up, and speak the truth, or—" he nodded toward the fire which smoldered menacingly as a Houssa policeman fed it little bits of broken sticks to keep it ready for fresh service.

"You are Hiji," said the prisoner, as though announcing that the sun had ceased to shine and the rivers ceased to flow. "You are He-Who-Comes-When-No-Man-Thinks-Him-Near. They told us you were gone away across the mighty water."

"Who told you this great lie, O fool?"

"Bazarri. He came with other white men through the woods and told us you were dead and that the soldiers of the Emperor-King would trouble us no more. They said the Leopard Men should rule the land again, and no one bid us stop."

"What were you doing here, son of a fish?"

"Last moon Bazarri sent us forth in search of slaves. Much help is needed for the digging which he makes, for he prepares a mighty pit where, in a night and a night, they celebrate the marriage of a mortal woman to the King of all the Devils. My brethren took the prisoners back, but I and as many others as a man has eyes remained behind to—"

"To stage a little private cannibalism, eh?"

"They told us that the soldiers would not come this way again," the prisoner answered in excuse.

Ingraham smiled, but not pleasantly. "That's the explanation, eh?" he murmured to himself. "No wonder we haven't seen or heard anything of the villagers. These damned slavers have taken most of 'em up to MacAndrews' and those they didn't kill or capture are hidin' in the bush." To the prisoner:

"Is this Bizarri a white man with the body of a youth and the wrinkled face of an old monkey?"

"Lord, who can say how you should know this thing?"

"Does he know that I am coming with my soldiers to send him to the land of ghosts?"

"Lord, he does not know. He thinks that you have gone across the great water. If he knew you were here he would have gone against you with his guns, and with the Leopard Men to kill you while you slept."

"The Emperor-King's men never sleep," retorted Ingraham. To Bendigo: "A firing-party for this one, Sergeant. The palaver is over."

"We must break camp at once," he added as eight tarbooshed policemen marched smartly past, their rifles at slant arms. "You heard what he said; they're all set to celebrate that girl's marriage to the Devil in two more nights. We can just make it to MacAndrews' by a forced march."

"Can't you spare this poor fellow's life?" I pleaded. "You've gotten what you want from him, and—"

"No chance," he told me shortly. "The penalty for membership in these Leopard Societies is death; so is the punishment for slaving and cannibalism. If it ever got about that we'd caught one of the 'Little Leopards' red-handed and let him off, government authority would get an awful black eye."

He buttoned his blouse, put on his helmet and marched across the clearing. "Detail, halt; front rank, kneel; ready; take aim—fire!" his orders rang in sharp staccato, and the prisoner toppled over eight rifle bullets in his breast.

Calmly as though it were a bit of everyday routine, Sergeant Bendigo advanced, drew his pistol and fired a bullet in the prone man's ear. The head, still bound in its fillet of leopard skin, bounced upward with the impact of the shot, then fell back flaccidly. The job was done.

"Dig a grave and pile some rocks on it, then cover it with ashes from the fire," Ingraham ordered. To me he added:

"Can't afford to have hyenas unearthin' him or vultures wheelin' round, you know. It would give the show away. If any of his little playmates found him and saw the bullet marks they might make tracks for MacAndrews'—and we want to get there first."

We broke camp in half an hour, pushed onward through the night and marched until our legs were merely so much aching muscles the next day. Six hours' rest then again the endless, hurrying march.

Twice we saw evidence of the Leopards' visits, deserted villages where blackened rings marked the site of burned huts, red stains upon the earth, vultures disputing over ghastly scraps of flesh and bone.

As we passed through the second village the scouts brought back a woman, a slender frightened girl of fifteen or so, with a face which might have been a Gorgon's and a figure fit to make a Broadway entrepreneur discharge his entire chorus in disgust.

"Thou art my father and my mother," she greeted Ingraham conventionally.

"Where are thy people?" he demanded.

"In the land of ghosts, lord," she replied. "A day and a day ago there came to us the servants of Bazarri, men of the Little Leopards, with iron claws upon their hands and white men's guns. They said to us: 'The Emperor-King is overthrown; no longer shall his soldiers bring the law to you. Come with us and serve Bazarri, who is the servant of the Great King of All Devils, and we shall make' you rich.'

"This is bad palaver, and when Hiji comes he will hang you to a tree,' my father told them.

"Hiji is gone across the great water, and will never come here more,' they told my father. Then they killed many of my people, and some they took as slaves to serve Bazarri where the King of Devils makes a marriage with a mortal woman. Lord, hadst thou been here three days ago my father had not died."

"Maiden," Ingraham answered, "go tell thy people to come again into their village and build the huts the evil men burned down. Behold, I and my soldiers travel swiftly to give punishment to these evil men. Some I shall hang and some my men will shoot; but surely I shall slay them all. Those who defy the Emperor-King's commands have not long lives."

The sudden tropic dark had long since fallen, and it was almost midnight by the hands on Ingraham's luminous watch dial when we reached the edge of a large clearing with a sharply rising hill upon its farther side. From behind this elevation shone a ruddy light, as though a dozen wooden houses burned at once.

"Quiet, thirty lashes for the one who makes a sound," said Ingraham as we halted at the forest edge. "Get those Lewis guns ready; fix bayonets.

"Sergeant, take two men and go forward. If any one accost you, shoot him down immediately. We'll charge the moment we hear a shot."

Twenty minutes, half an hour, three-quarters, passed. Still no warning shot, no sign of Sergeant Bendigo or his associates.

"By the Lord Harry, I'm half a mind to chance it!" Ingraham muttered. "They may have done Bendigo in, and—"

"No, sar, Bendigo is here," a whisper answered him, and a form rose suddenly before us. "Bendigo has drunk the broth of serpent's flesh, he can move through the dark and not be seen."

"I'll say he can," the Englishman agreed. "What's doing?"

"No end dam' swanky palaver over there," returned the sergeant. "Many people sit around like elders at the council and watch while others make some show before them. I think we better go there pretty soon."

"So do I," returned his officer.

"Attention, charge bayonets; no shooting till I give the word. Quick step, march!"

We passed across the intervening clearing, mounted the steep slope of grassy bank, and halted at the ridge. Before us, like a stage, was such a sight as I had never dreamed of, even in my wildest flights of fancy.

24. *The Devil's Bride*

"GREAT GUNS!" INGRAHAM EXCLAIMED as we threw ourselves upon our stomachs and wriggled to the crown of the hill, "old MacAndrews knew a thing or two, don'ty as he was! Look at that masonry—perfect as it was when Augustus Caesar ruled the world! The old Scotsman would have had the laugh on all of 'em, if he'd only lived."

What I had thought a long, steep-sided natural hill was really the nearer of two parallel earthen ramparts, and between these, roughly oval in form, a deep excavation had been made, disclosing tier on tier of ancient stone benches rising terrace-like about an amphitheater. Behind these were retaining walls of mortised stone—obviously the well-preserved remains of a Roman circus.

The arena between the curving ranks of benches was paved with shining sand, washed and rewashed until it shone with almost dazzling whiteness, and the whole enclosure was aglow with ruddy light, for stretching in an oval round the sanded floor was set a line of oil-palms, each blazing furiously, throwing tongues of orange flame high in the air and making every object in the excavation visible as though illumined by the midday sun.

The leaping, crackling flames disclosed the tenants of the benches, row after row of red-robed figures, hoods drawn well forward on their

faces, hands hidden in the loose sleeves of their gown, but every, one intent upon the spectacle below, heads bent, each line of their voluminously robed bodies instinct with eagerness and gloating, half-restrained anticipation.

The circus proper was some hundred yards in length by half as many wide. Almost beneath us crouched a group of black musicians who, even as we looked, began a thumping monody on their double-headed drums, beating a sort of slow adagio with one hand, a fierce, staccato syncopation with the other. The double-timed insistence of it mounted to my head like some accursed drug. Despite myself I felt my hands and feet twitching to the rhythm of those drums, a sort of tingling racing up my spine. The red-robed figures on the benches were responding, too, heads swaying, hands no longer hidden in their sleeves, but striking together softly, as if in acclamation of the drummers' skill.

At the arena's farther end, where the double line of benches broke, was hung a long red curtain blazoned with the silver image of the strutting peacock, and from behind the folds of the thick drapery we saw that some activity was toward, for the carmine cloth would swing in rippling folds from time to time as though invisible hands were clutching it.

"Now, I wonder what the deuce—" Ingraham began, but stopped abruptly as the curtain slowly parted and into the firelight marched a figure. From neck to heels he was enveloped in a robe of shimmering scarlet silk, thick-sewn with glistening gems worked in the image of a peacock. Upon his head he wore a beehive-shaped turban of red silk set off with a great medallion of emeralds.

One look identified him. Though we had seen him suffer death in the electric chair and later looked upon him lying in his casket, there was no doubt in either of our minds. The Oriental potentate who paced the shining sands before us was Grigor Bazrov, the Red Priest who officiated at the Mass of St. Setaire.

Beside him, to his right and left, and slightly to the rear, marched the men who acted as deacon and sub-deacon when he served the altar of the Devil, but now they were arrayed in costumes almost as gorgeous as their chief's, turbans of mixed red and black upon their heads, brooches of red stones adorning them, curved swords flashing in jeweled scabbards at their waists.

Attended by his satellites the Red Priest made the circuit of the colosseum, and as he passed, the red-robed figures on the benches arose and did him reverence.

Now he and his attendants took station before the squatting drum-

mers, and as he raised his hand in signal the curtains at the arena's farther end were parted once again and from them came a woman, tall, fair-haired, purple-eyed, enveloped in a loose-draped cloak of gleaming cloth of gold. A moment she paused breathlessly upon the margin of the shining sand, and as she waited two tall black women, stark naked save for gold bands about their wrists and ankles, stepped quickly forward from the curtain's shrouding folds, grasped the golden cloak which clothed her and lifted it away, so that she stood revealed nude as her two serving-maids, her white and lissom body gleaming in sharp contrast to their black forms as an ivory figurine might shine beside two statues of ebony.

A single quick glance told us she was crazed with aphrodisiacs and the never-pausing rhythm of the drums. With a wild, abandoned gesture she threw back her mop of yellow hair, tossed her arms above her head and, bending nearly double, raced across the sands until she paused a moment by the drummers, her body stretched as though upon a rack as she rose on tiptoe and reached her hands up to the moonless sky.

Then the dance. As thin as nearly fleshless bones could make her, her figure still was slight, rather than emaciated, and as she bent and twisted, writhed and whirled, then stood stock-still and rolled her narrow hips and straight, flat abdomen, I felt the hot blood mounting in my cheeks and the pulses beating in my temples in time with the insistent throbbing of the drums. Pose after pose instinct with lecherous promise melted into still more lustful postures as patterns change their forms upon the lens of a kaleidoscope.

Now a vocal chorus seconded the music of the tom-toms:

*"Ho, ho! hola,
Ho, ho! hola;
You bonia berbe Agid!"*

The Red Priest and the congregation repeated the lines endlessly, striking their hands together at the ending of each stanza.

"Good God!" Ingraham muttered in my ear. "D'ye get it Trow-bridge?"

"No," I whispered back. "What is it?"

"*'You bonia berbe Agid'* means 'thou has become a lamb of the Devil!' It's the invocation which precedes a human sacrifice!"

"B—but—" I faltered, only to have the words die upon my tongue,

for the Red Priest stepped forward, unsheathing the scimitar from the jeweled scabbard at his waist. He tendered it to her, blade foremost, and I winced involuntarily as I saw her take the steel in her bare hand and saw the blood spurt like a ruby dye between her fingers as the razor-edge bit through the soft flesh to the bone.

But in her wild delirium she was insensible to pain. The curved sword whirled like darting lightning round her head, circling and flashing in the burning palm-trees' light till it made a silver halo for her golden hair. Then —

It all occurred so quickly that I scarcely knew what happened till the act was done. The wildly whirling blade reversed its course, struck inward suddenly and passed across her slender throat, its superfine edge propelled so fiercely by her maddened hand that she was virtually decapitated.

The rhythm of the drums increased, the flying fingers of the drummers increased, the flying fingers of the drummers beating a continuous roar which filled the sultry night like thunder, and the red-robed congregation rose like one individual, bellowing wild approval at the suicide. The dancer tripped and stumbled in her corymbantic measure, a spate of ruby lifeblood cataracting down her snow bosom; wheeled round upon her toes a turn or two, then toppled to the sand, her hands and feet and body twitching with a tremor like the jerking of a victim of St. Vitus dance. She raised herself upon her elbows and tried to call aloud, but the gushing blood drowned out her voice. Then she fell forward on her face and lay prostrate in the sand, her dying heart still pumping spurts of blood from her severed veins and arteries.

The sharp, involuntary twitching of the victim ceased, and with it stopped the gleeful rumble of the drums. The Red Priest raised his hand as if in invocation. "That the Bride of Lucifer may tread across warm blood!" he told the congregation in a booming voice, then pointed to the crimson pool which dyed the snowy sand before the trailing scarlet curtain.

The two black women who had taken off her cloak approached the quivering body of the self-slain girl, lifted it — one by the shoulders, the other by the feet — and bore it back behind the scarlet curtain, their progress followed by a trail of ruddy drops which trickled from the dead girl's severed throat at every step they took.

Majestically the Red Priest drew his scarlet mantle round him, waved to the drummers to precede him, then followed by his acolytes, passed

through the long red curtains in the wake of the victim and the bearers of the dead.

A whispering buzz, a sort of oestrus of anticipation, ran through the red-robed congregation as the archpriest vanished, but the danging, brazen booming of a bell cut the stibilation short.

Clang!

A file of naked blacks marched out in the arena, each carrying a sort of tray slung from a strap about his shoulders, odd, gourd-like pendants hanging from the board. Each held a short stave with a leather-padded head in either hand, and with a start of horror I recognized the things—trust a physician of forty years' experience to know a human thigh-bone when he sees it!

Clang!

The black men squatted on the glittering, firelit sand, and without a signal of any sort that we could see, began to hammer on the little tables resting on their knees. The things were crude marimbas, primitive xylophones with hollow gourds hung under them for resonators, and, incredible as it seemed, produced a music strangely like the reeding of an organ. A long, resounding chord, so cleverly sustained that it simulated the great swelling of a bank of pipes; then, slowly, majestically, there boomed forth within that ancient Roman amphitheater the Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin*.

Clang!

Unseen hands put back the scarlet curtain which had screened the Red Priest's exit. There, reared against the amphitheater's granite wall, was a cathedral altar, ablaze with glittering candles. Arranged behind the altar like a reredos was a giant figure, an archangelic figure with great, outspread wings, but with the long, bearded face of a leering demon, goat's horns protruding from its brow. The crucifix upon the altar was reversed, and beneath its down-turned head stretched the scarlet mattress which I knew would later hold a human altar-cloth. To right and left were small side altars, like sanctuaries raised to saints in Christian churches. That to the right bore the hideous figure of a man in ancient costume with the head of a rhinoceros. I had seen its counterpart in a museum; it was the figure of the Evil One of Olden Egypt, Set, the slayer of Osiris. Upon the left was raised an altar to an obscene idol carved of some black stone, a female figure, gnarled and knotted and articulated in a manner suggesting horrible deformity. From the shoulder-sockets three arms sprang out to right and left, a sort of pointed cap adorned the head, and about the pendulous breasts serpents twined and writhed, while a girdle of gleaming

skulls, carved of white bone, encircled the waist. Otherwise it was nude, with a nakedness which seemed obscene even to me, a medical practitioner for whom the human body held no secrets. Kali, "the Six-Armed One of Horrid Form," goddess of the murderous Thugs of India, I knew the thing to be.

Clang!

The bell beat out its twelfth and final stroke, and from an opening in the wall directly under us a slow procession came. First walked the crucifer, the *corpus* of his cross head-downward, a peacock's effigy perched atop the rood; then, two by two, ten acolytes with swinging censers, the fumes of which swirled slowly through the air in writhing clouds of heady, maddening perfume. Next marched a robed and surpliced man who swung a tinkling sacring bell, and then, beneath a canopy of scarlet silk embossed with gold, the Red Priest came, arrayed in full ecclesiastical regalia. Close in his footsteps marched his servers, vested as deacon and subdeacon, and after them a double file of women votaries arrayed in red, long veils of crimson set upon their heads, hands crossed demurely on their bosoms.

Slowly the procession passed between the rows of blazing palm-trees, deployed before the altar and formed in crescent shape, the Red Priest and his acolytes in the center.

A moment's pause in the marimba music; then the Red Priest raised his hand, palm forward, as if in salutation, and chanted solemnly:

*"To the Gods of Egypt who are Devils,
To the Gods of Babylon in Nether Darkness,
To all the Gods of all Forgotten Peoples,
Who rest not, but lust eternally—Hail!"*

Turning to the rhinoceros-headed monster on the right he bowed respectfully and called:

*"Hail Thee who art Doubly Evil,
Who comest forth from Ahi,
Who proceedest from the Lake of Nefer,
Who comest from the Courts of Sethel—Hail!"*

To the left he turned and invoked the female horror:

"Hail, Kali, Daughter of Himavat,

*Hail, Thou about whose waist hang human skulls,
Hail, Devil of Horrid Form,
Malign Image of Destructiveness,
Eater-up of all that is good,
Disseminator of all which is wicked— Hail !'*

Finally, looking straight before him, he raised both hands above his head and fairly screamed:

*"And Thou, Great Barran-Sathanas,
Arid, Beelzebub, Lucifer, Asmodeum,
Or whatever name Thou wishest to be known by,
Lucifer, Mighty Lord of Earth,
Prince of the Powers of the Air;
We give Thee praise and adoration,
Now and ever, Mighty Master,
Hail all hail, Great Lucifer. Hail, all hail !"*

"All hail !" responded the red congregation.

Slowly the Red Priest mounted to the sanctuary. A red nun tore away her habit, rending scarlet silk and cloth as though in very ecstasy of haste, and, nude and gleaming-white, climbed quickly up and laid herself upon the scarlet cushion. They set the chalice and the paten on her bared breast and the Red Priest genuflected low before the living altar, then turned and, kneeling with his back presented to the sanctuary, crossed himself in reverse with his left hand and, rising once again, his left hand raised, bestowed a mimic blessing on the congregation.

A long and death-still silence followed, a silence so intense that we could hear the hissing of the resin as the palm-trees burned, and when a soldier moved uneasily beside me in the grass the rasping of his tunic buttons on the earth came shrilly to my ears.

"Now, what the deuce—" Ingraham began, but checked himself and craned his neck to catch a glimpse of what was toward in the arena under us; for, as one man, the red-robed congregation had turned to face the tunnel entrance leading to the amphitheater opposite the altar, and a sign that sounded like the rustling of the autumn wind among the leaves made the circuit of the benches.

I could not see the entrance, for the steep sides of the excavation hid it from my view, but in a moment I descried a double row of iridescent peacocks strutting forward, their shining tails erected, their glistening

wings lowered till the quills cut little furrows in the sand. Slowly, pridefully, as though they were aware of their magnificence, the jeweled birds marched across the hippodrome, and in their wake—

"For God's sake!" exclaimed Ingraham.

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated.

"Alice!" John Davisson's low cry was freighted with stark horror and despairing recognition.

It was Alice; unquestionably it was she; but how completely metamorphosed! A diadem of beaten gold, thick-set with flashing jewels, was clasped about her head. Above the circlet, where dark hair and white skin met at the temples, there *grew a pair of horns!* They grew, there was no doubt of it, for even at that distance I could see the skin fold forward round the bony base of the protuberances; no skilful make-up artist could have glued them to her flesh in such a way. Incredible—impossible—as I knew it was, it could not be denied. A pair of curving goat-horns *grew* from the girl's head and reared upward exactly like the horns on carved or painted figures of the Devil!

A collar of gold workmanship, so wide its outer edges rested on her shoulders, was round her neck, and below the gleaming gorget her white flesh shone like ivory; for back, abdomen and bosom were undodthcd and the nipples of her highset, virgin breasts were stained a brilliant red with benna. About her waist was locked the silver marriage girdle of the Yezidees, the girdle she had worn so laughingly that winter evening long ago when we assembled at St. Chrysostom's to rehearse her wedding to John Davisson. Below the girdle—possibly supported by it—hung a skirt of iridescent sequins, so long that it barely cleared her ankles, so tight that it gave her only four or five scant inches for each pace, so that she walked with slow, painstaking care lest the fctter of the garment's hem should trip her as she stepped. The skirt trailed backward in a point a foot or so behind her, leaving a little track in the soft sand, as though a serpent had crawled there and, curiously, giving an oddly serpentine appearance from the rear.

Bizarre and sinister as her costume was, the transformation of her face was more so. The slow, half-scornful, half-mocking smile upon her painted mouth, the beckoning, alluring glance which looked out from between her kohl-stained eyelids, the whole provocative expression of her countenance was strange to Alice Hume. This was no woman we had ever known, this horned, barbaric figure was some wanton, cruel she-devil who beld possession of the body we had known as hers.

And so she trod across the shining sand on naked, milk-white feet, the serpent-track left by her trailing gown winding behind her like an accusation. And as she walked she waved her jewel-encrusted hands before her, weaving fantastic arabesques in empty air as Eastern fakirs do when they would lay a charm on the beholder.

*"Hail, Bride of Night,
Hail, horned Bride of Mighty Lucifer;
Hail, thou who comest from the depths of
far Abaddon;
Hail and thrice hail to her who passes over
blood and fire
That she may greet her Bridegroom!
Hail, all hail!"*

cried the Red Priest, and as he finished speaking, from each side the altar rushed a line of red-veiled women, each bearing in her hands a pair of wooden pincers between the prongs of which there glowed and smoldered a small square of super-heated stone. That the rocks were red-hot could not be denied, for we could see the curling smoke and even little licking tongues of flame as the wooden tongs took fire from them.

The women laid their fiery burdens down upon the sand, making an incandescent path of glowing stepping-stones some ten feet long, leading directly to the altar's lowest step.

And now the strange, barbaric figure with its horn-crowned head had reached the ruddy stain upon the sand where the dancing suicide had bled her life away, and now her snowy feet were stained a horrid scarlet, but never did she pause in her slithering step. Now she reached the path of burning stones, and now her tender feet were pressed against them, but she neither hastened nor retreated in her march—to blood and fire alike she seemed indifferent.

Now she reached the altar's bottom step and paused a moment, not in doubt or fear, but rather seeming to debate the easiest way to mount the step's low lift and yet not trip against the binding hobble of her skirt's tight hem.

At length, when one or two false trials had been made, she managed to get up the step by turning sidewise and raising her nearer foot with slow care, transferring her weight to it, then mounting with a sudden hopping jump.

Three steps she had negotiated in this slow, awkward fashion, when: "For God's sake, aren't you going to *do* anything?" John Davison hissed in Ingraham's ear. "She almost up—are you going to let 'em go through with—"

"Sergeant," Ingraham turned to Bendigo, ignoring John completely, "are the guns in place?"

"Yas, sar, everything dam' top-hole," the sergeant answered with a grin.

"Very well, then, a hundred yards will be about the proper range. Ready—"

The order died upon his lips, and he and I and all of us sat forward, staring in hang-jawed amazement.

From the tunnel leading to the ancient dungeons at the back of the arena, a slender figure came, paused a moment at the altar steps, then mounted them in three quick strides.

It was Jules de Grandin.

He was in spotless khaki, immaculate from linen-covered sun-hat to freshly polished boots; his canvas jacket and abbreviated cotton-shorts might just have left the laundress' hands, and from the way he bore his slender silver-headed cane beneath his left elbow one might have thought that he was ready for a promenade instead of risking almost sure and dreadful death.

"*Pardonnez-moi, Messieurs—Mesdames*"—he bowed politely to the company of priests and women at the altar—"but this wedding, he can not go on. No, he must be stopped—right away; at once."

The look upon the Red Priest's face was almost comical. His big, sad eyes were opened till it seemed that they were lidless, and a corpse-gray pallor overspread his wrinkled countenance.

"Who dares forbid the banns?" he asked, recovering his aplomb with difficulty.

"*Parbleu*," the little Frenchman answered with a smile, "the British Empire and the French Republic for two formidable objectors; and last, although by no means least, *Monseigneur*, no less a one than Jules de Grandin."

"Audacious fool!" the Red Priest almost howled.

"But certainly," de Grandin bowed, as though acknowledging a compliment, "*l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace*; it is I."

The Devil's Bride had reached the topmost step while this colloquy was toward. Absorbed in working herself up to the altar, she had not

realized the visitor's identity. Now, standing at the altar, she recognized de Grandin, and her pose of evil provocation dropped from her as if it were a cast-off garment.

"Doctor—Doctor de Grandin!" she gasped unbelievably, and with a futile, piteous gesture she clasped her hands across her naked bosom as though to draw a cloak around herself.

"*Précisément, ma pauvre*, and I am here to take you home," the little Frenchman answered, and though he looked at her and smiled, his little sharp blue eyes were alert to note the smallest movement of the men about the altar.

The Red Priest's voice broke in on them. "Wretched meddler, do you imagine that your God can save you now?" he asked.

"He has been known to work much greater miracles," de Grandin answered mildly. "Meantime, if you will kindly stand aside—"

The Red Priest interrupted in a low-pitched, deadly voice: "Before tomorrow's sun has risen we'll crucify you on that altar, as—"

"As you did crucify the poor young woman in America?" de Grandin broke in coldly. "I do not think you will, my friend."

"No? Dmitri, Kasimir—seize this cursed dog!"

The deacon and subdeacon, who had been edging closer all the while, leaped forward at their master's bidding, but the deacon halted suddenly, as though colliding with an unseen barrier, and the savage snarl upon his gipsy features gave way to a puzzled look—a look of almost comic pained surprise. Then we saw spreading on his face a widening smear of red—red blood which ran into his eyes and dripped down on his parted lips before he tumbled headlong to the crimson carpet spread before the altar.

The other man had raised his hands, intent on bringing them down on de Grandin's shoulders with a crushing blow. Now, suddenly, the raised hands shook and quivered in the air, then clutched spasmodically at nothing, while a look of agony spread across his face. He hiccupped once and toppled forward, a spate of ruby blood pouring from his mouth and drowning out his death cry.

"And still you would deny me one poor miracle, *Monsieur P*?" de Grandin asked the Red Priest in a level, almost toneless voice.

Indeed, it seemed miraculous. Two men had died—from gunshot wounds, by all appearances—yet we had heard no shot. But:

"Nice work, Frenchy!" Ingraham whispered approvingly. "They have some sharpshooters with silencers on their guns up there," he told

me. "I saw the flashes when those two coves got it in the neck. Slick work, eh, what? He'll have those fellers groggy in a minute, and—"

The Red Priest launched himself directly at de Grandin with a roar of bestial fury. The little Frenchman sidestepped neatly, grasped the silver handle of his cane where it projected from his left elbow, and drew the gleaming sword blade from the stick.

"*Ah-ha!*" he chuckled. "*Ah-ha-ha, Monsieur Diabolotto*, you did not hargain for this, *hein?*" He swung the needle-like rapier before him in a flashing circle, then, swiftly as a cobra strikes, thrust forward. "That one for the poor girl whom you crucified!" he cried, and the Red Priest staggered back a step, his hand raised to his face. The Frenchman's blade had pierced his left eyeball.

"And take this for the poor one whom you blinded!" de Grandin told him as he thrust a second time, driving the rapier point full in the other eye.

The Red Priest tottered drunkenly, his hands before his blinded eyes, but de Grandin knew no mercy. "And you may have this for the honest gendarme whom you shot," he added, lashing the blind man's wrinkled cheeks with the flat of his blade, "and last of all, take this for those so helpless little lads who died upon your cursed altar!" He sank backward on one foot, then straightened suddenly forward, stiffening his sword-arm and plunging his point directly in the Red Priest's opened mouth.

A scream of agonizing pain rang out with almost deafening shrillness, and the blind man partly turned, as though upon an unseen pivot, clawed with horrid impotence at the wire-fine blade of the little Frenchman's rapier, then sank slowly to the altar, his death-scream stifled to a sickening gurgle as his throat filled up with blood.

"*Fin!*" de Grandin cried, then:

"If you are ready, *Mademoiselle*, we shall depart," he bowed to Alice, and:

"*Hole—la corde!*" he cried abruptly, raising his hand in signal to some one overhead.

Like a great serpent, a thick hemp hawser twisted down against the amphitheater's wall, and in the fading light shed from the burning trees we saw the gleam of blue coats and red fezzes where the native gendarmes stood above the excavation, their rifles at the "ready."

De Grandin flung an arm around Alice, took a quick turn of the rope around his other arm, and nodded vigorously. Like the flying fairies in a pantomime they rose up in the air, past the high altar, past the horned and pintoned image of the Devil, past the stone wall of the

colosseum, upward to the excavation's lip, where ready hands stretched out to drag them back to safety.

Now the red congregation was in tumult. While de Grandin parleyed with the Red Priest, even while he slew him with his sword, they had sat fixed in stupor, but as they saw the Frenchman and the girl hauled up to safety, a howl like the war-cry of the gathered demons of the pit rose from their throats—a cry of burning rage and thwarted lust and bitter, mordant disappointment. "Kill him!—after him!—crucify him!—burn him!" came the shouted admonition, and more than one cowed member of the mob drew out a pistol and fired it at the light patch which de Grandin's spotless costume made against the shadow.

"Fire!" roared Ingraham to his soldiers, and the crashing detonation of a rifle volley echoed through the night, and after it came the deadly *clack-clack-clatter* of the Lewis guns.

And from the farther side of the arena the French troops opened fire, their rifles blazing death, their Maxims spraying steady streams of bullets at the massed forms on the benches.

Suddenly there came a fearful detonation, accompanied by a blinding flare of flame. From somewhere on the French side a *bombe de main*—a hand grenade—was thrown, and like a bolt of lightning it burst against the stone wall shoring up the terraced seats about the colosseum.

The result was cataclysmic. The Roman architects who designed the palace had built for permanency, but close upon two thousand years had passed since they had laid those stones, and centuries of pressing earth and trickling subsoil waters had crumbled the cement. When the Satanists turned back the earth they had not stopped to reinforce the masonry or shore up the raw edges of their cutting. Accordingly, the fierce explosion of the bursting bomb precipitated broken stone and sand and rubble into the ancient hippodrome, and instantly a landslide followed. Like sand that trickles in an open pit the broken stone and earth rushed down, engulfing the arena.

"Back—give back!" Ingraham cried, and we raced to safety with the earth falling from beneath our very feet.

It was over in a moment. Only a thin, expiring wisp of smoke emerging through a cleft in the slowly settling earth told where the palm-trees had been blazing furiously a few minutes before. Beneath a hundred thousand tons of sand and crumbling clay and broken stone was buried once again the ancient Roman ruin, and with it every one of those who traveled round the world to see a mortal woman wedded to the Devil.

"By gosh, I think that little Frog was right whe he said '*fin*,'" Ingraham exclaimed as he line his Houssas up.

"*Hamdullah*, trouble comes, O Hiji!" Sergeant Bendigo announced. "Leopard fellers heard our shooting and come to see about it, Allah curse their noseless fathers!"

"By Jove, you're right!" Ingraham cried. "Form square—machine-guns to the front. At two hundred yards—fire!" The volley blazed and crackled from the line of leveled rifles and the shrewish chatter of the Lewis guns mingled with the wild, inhuman screams of the attackers.

On they came, their naked, chon bodies one shade darker than the moonless tropic night, their belts and caps of leopard skin showing golden in the gloom. Man after man went down before the hail of lead, but on they came; closer, closer, closer!

Now something whistled through the air with a wicked, whirring sound, and the man beside me stumbled back, a five-foot killing spear protruding from his breast. "All things are with Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!" he choked, and the blood from his punctured lung made a horrid, gurgling noise, like water running down a partly occluded drain.

Now they were upon us, and we could see the camwood stains upon their faces and the markings on their wicker shields and the gleaming strings of human toe and finger bones which hung about their necks. We were outnumbered ten to one, and though the Houssas held their line with perfect discipline, we knew that it was hut a matter of a quarter-hour at most before the last of us went down beneath the avalanche of pressing bodies and stabbing spears.

"*Baso-netie au canon—Chargez!*" the order rang out sharply on our left, followed by the shrilling of a whistle from the right, and a half a hundred blue-clothed Senegalese gendarmes hurled themselves upon the left flank of our enemies, while as many more crashed upon the foemen from the right, bayonets flashing in the gun-fire, black faces mad with killing-lust and shining with the sweat of fierce exertion.

Now there was a different *tremble* in the Human Leopards' cries. Turned from hunters into quarry, like their hestial prototypes they stood at bay; hut the lean, implacable Senegalese were at their hacks, their eighteen-inch bayonets stabbing mercilessly, and Ingraham's Houssas harred their path in front.

At last a Leopard Man threw down his spear, and in a moment all were empty-handed. "*Faire halte!*" Renouard commanded, jamming his

pistol back into its holster and shouldering his way between the ranks of cringing captives.

"*Monsieur le Capitaine*," he saluted Ingraham with due formality, "I greatly deprecate the circumstances which have forced us to invade your territory, and herewith tender our apologies, but —"

"Apology's accepted, sweet old soul!" the Englishman cut in, clapping an arm about the Frenchman's shoulders and shaking him affectionately. "But I'd like to have your counsel in an important matter."

"*Mais certainement*," Renouard returned politely. "The matter for discussion is —" he paused expectantly.

"Do we hang or shoot these blighters?" Ingraham rejoined, nodding toward the group of prisoners.

25. The Summing Up

RENOUARD AND INGRAHAM STAYED BEHIND to gather up loose ends—the "loose ends" being such members of the Leopard Men as had escaped the wholesale execution—for they were determined to exterminate the frightful cult. De Grandin and I, accompanied by a dozen Senegalese gendarmes, took Alice overland to Dakar, and Renouard dispatched a messenger before us to advise the hospital that we would need a private room for several days.

Since the night de Grandin rescued her the girl had lain in a half-stupor, and when she showed signs of returning consciousness the little Frenchman promptly gave her opiates. "It is better that she wake when all is finished and regard the whole occurrence as a naughty dream," he told me.

"But how the deuce did they graft those devilish horns on her?" I wondered. "There is no doubt about it; the things are growing, but —"

"All in good time," he soothed. "When we arrive at Dakar we shall see, my friend."

We did. The morning after our arrival we took her to the operating room, and while she lay in anesthesia, de Grandin deftly laid the temporal skin aside, making a perfect star-shaped incision.

"Name of a little blue man, behold, my friend!" he ordered, bending across the operating table and pointing at the open wound with his scalpel tip. "They were clever, those ones, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

The lower ends of the small horns had been skilfully riveted to thin disks of gold and these had been inserted underneath the skin, which had then been sewn in place, so that the golden disks, held firmly he-

tween skin and tissue, had acted as anchors for the horns, which thus appeared to grow upon the young girl's head.

"Clever?" I echoed. "It's diabolical."

"*Eh bien*, they are frequently the same, my friend."

He sewed the slit skin daintily with an invisible subcutaneous stitch, matching the cut edges so perfectly that only the thinnest hair-line of red showed where he worked.

"*Voilà*," he announced. This fellow Jules de Grandin puzzles me, my friend. When he acts the physician I am sure he is a better doctor than policeman, but when he is pursuing evil-doers I think he is a better gendarme than physician. The devil take the fellow; I shall never make him out!"

The little freighter wallowed in the rising swells, her twin propellers churning the blue water into buttermilk. Far astern the coast of Africa lay like the faintest wisp of smoke against the sky. Ahead lay France. De Grandin lit another cigarette and turned his quick, bird-like look from Renouard to me, then to the deck chairs where Davisson and Alice lay side by side, their fingers clasped, the light that never was on land or sea within their eyes.

"*Non*, my friends," he told us, "it is most simple when you understand it. How could the evil fellow leave his cell at the *poste de police*, invade Friend Trowbridge's house and all but murder *Mademoiselle*? How could he be lodged all safely in his cell, yet be abroad to kill poor Hornsby and all but kill the good Costello? How could he die in the electric chair, and lie all dead within his coffin, yet send his wolves to kidnap *Mademoiselle* Alice? You ask me?"

"*Ah-ha*, the answer is he did not!"

"What do you think from that, *hélas*?"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, stop talking rot and tell us how it was—if you really know," I shot back crossly.

He grinned delightedly. "Perfectly, my friend. *Ecoutez-moi, s'il vous plait*. When these so trying questions first began to puzzle me I drew my bow at venture. 'If *la Sureté* can not tell me of him I am shipwrecked—no, how do you call him? sunk?'—I tell me. But I have great faith. A man so wicked as Bazarov, and an European as well, has surely run afoul of the law in France, I think, and if he has done so the *Sureté* most certainly has his *dossier*. And so I get his photograph and fingerprints from the governor of the prison and forward them to Paris. My answer waited for me at police headquarters at Dakar. It is this:

"Some five and forty years ago there lived in Mohilef a family named Bazarov. They had twin sons, Grigor and Vladimir. They were Roman Catholics.

"To be a Roman Catholic in Imperial Russia was much like being a Negro in the least enlightened of your Southern states today, my friends. Their political disabilities were burdensome, even in that land of dreadful despotism, and they walked in daily fear of molestation by the police, as well, since by the very fact of their adherence to the Church of Rome they were more than suspected of sympathy with Poland's aspirations for independence. The Poles, you will recall, are predominantly Roman Catholic in religion.

"Very well. The brothers Bazarov grew up, and in accordance with their parents' fondest wish, were sent to Italy to study for the church. In time they came back to their native land, duly ordained as fathers in the Roman Church, and sent to minister to their co-religionists in Russia. The good God knows there was a need of fathers in that land of orphans.

"Now in Russia they had a law which made the person having knowledge—even indirect—of conspiracy to change the form of government, with or without violence, punishable by penal sentence for six years if he failed to transmit information to the police. A harmless literary club was formed in Mohilef and the brothers Bazarov attended several meetings, as a number of the members were of the Roman faith.

"When the police learned of this club, they pounced upon the members, and though there was not evidence enough to convict a weasel of chicken-killing, the poor wretches were found guilty, just the same, and sentenced to Siberia. The two young priests were caught in the police net, too, and charged with treasonably withholding information—because it was assumed they must have heard some treasonable news when they sat to hear confessions! *Enfin*, they were confined within the fortress-prison of St. Peter and St. Paul.

"They were immured in dungeons far below the level of the river, dungeons into which the water poured in time of inundation, so that the rats crawled on their shoulders to save themselves from drowning. What horrid tortures they were subject to within that earthly hell we can not surely say; but this we know: When they emerged from four years' suffering inside those prison walls, they came forth old and wrinkled men; moreover, they, who had received the rites of holy ordination, were atheists, haters of God and all his works, and sworn to sow the seed of atheism wherever they might go.

"We find them, then, as members of a group of anarchists in Paris, and there they were arrested, and much of their sad story written in the archives of the Surete.

"Another thing: As not infrequently happens among Russians, these brethren were possessed of an uncanny power over animals. Wild, savage dogs would fawn on them, the very lions and tigers in the zoo would follow them as far as the limits of their cages would permit, and seemed to greet them with all signs of friendship.

"You comprehend?"

"Why—you mean that while Grigor was under arrest his brother Vladimir impersonated him and broke into my house, then went out gunning for Costello—" I began, but he interrupted with a laugh.

"Oh, Trowbridge, great philosopher, how readily you see the light when someone sets the lamp aglow!" he cried. "Yes, you are right. It was no supernatural ability which enabled him to leave his prison cell at will—even to make a mock of Death's imprisonment. Grigor was locked in prison—executed—but Vladimir, his twin and double, remained at large to carry on their work. But now he, too, is dead. I killed him when we rescued Mademoiselle Alice."

"One other thing, my Jules," Renouard demanded. "When they prepared to wed *Mademoiselle* to Satan, they made her walk all barefoot upon those burning stones. Was not that magic of a sort?"

De Grandin tweaked the needle-points of his mustache. "A juggler's trick," he answered. "That fire-walking, he is widely practiced in some places, and always most successfully. The stones they use are porous as a sponge. They heat to incandescence quickly, but just as quickly they give off their heat. When they were laid upon the moistened sand these stones were cool enough to hold within your ungloved hand in thirty seconds. Some time was spent in mummery before they had *Mademoiselle* to walk on them. By the time she stepped upon them they were cold as any money-lender's heart."

The ship's bell beat out eight quick strokes. De Grandin dropped down from his seat upon the rail and tweaked the waxed tips of his mustache until they stood out like twin needles each side his small and thin-lipped mouth. "Come, if you please," he ordered us.

"Where?" asked Alice.

"To the chart room, of course. The land has disappeared"—he waved his hand toward the horizon where rolling blue water met a calm blue sky—"and we are now upon the high sea."

"Well?" demanded John.

"Well? Name of a little green pig with most deplorably bad manners! I shall say it is well. Do not you know that masters of ships on the high seas are empowered by the law to solemnize the rite of marriage?"

Something of the old Alice we had known in other days looked from the tired and careworn face above the collar of her traveling-coat as she replied: "I'm game;" then, eyes dropped demurely, and a slight flush in her cheeks, she added softly: "if John still wants me."

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony," read the captain from the Book of Common Prayer . . . "If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else forever after hold his peace."

"Yes, *pardieu*, let him speak — and meet his death at Jules de Grandin's hands!" the little Frenchman murmured, thrusting one hand beneath his jacket where his automatic pistol rested in its shoulder holster.

"And now, with due solemnity, let us consign this *sacre* thing unto the ocean, and may the sea never give up its dead!" de Grandin announced when John and Alice Davisson, Renouard and I came from the captain's sanctum, the tang of champagne still upon our lips. He raised his hand and a silvery object glittered in the last rays of the setting sun, flashed briefly through the air, then sank without a trace beneath the blue sea water. It was the marriage girdle of the Yezidees.

"Oh," Alice cried, "you've thrown away 'the luck of the Humes'!"

"Precisely so, *Americ*," he answered with a smile. "There are no longer

A Complete Adventure of
Jules de Grandin and Dr. Trowbridge

ANCIENT FIRES

has been scheduled for the Summer #13 issue of

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any Humes, only Davissons. *Le bon Dieu* grant there may be many of them."

We have just returned from the christening of Alice's twin boys, Renouard de Grandin and Trowbridge Ingraham Davisson. The little villains howled right lustily when Doctor Bentley put the water on their heads, and:

"*Grand Dieu des porcs*, the Evil One dies hard in those small sinners!" said Jules de Grandin.

Ingraham, engrossed with ministerial duties in West Africa, was unable to be present, but the silver mugs he sent the youngsters are big enough to hold their milk for years to come.

As I write this, Renouard, de Grandin and Costello are very drunk in my consulting-room. I can hear Costello and Renouard laugh with that high-pitched cackinnation which only those far gone in liquor use at some droll anecdote which Jules de Grandin tells.

I think that I shall join them. Surely, there is one more drink left in the bottle.

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WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE

Not Only In Death They Die

by ROBERT E. HOWARD

The old man leaned on his rusty spade;
Down his gnarled arms the slow sweat ran.
I came through the moon and the black moon shade:
"Dig me a grave, old man."

The old man lifted his spade again:
"The night is waning, begone!" he said.
"I owe no labor to living men,
"I only serve the dead."

"Lay by, lay by the spade, old man,
"And look for a space into my eyes."
And into my eyes he gazed for a span,
While the moon waned in the skies.

"If ever a raven looked as I,
"He would rend for his feast, those eyes away."
And the old man lifted his shovel high
And drove it into the clay.

"The loam gives way and the pebbles part;
"I bring you rest, who have brought no lies.
"They can hide the Death that is in the heart,
"But not the Death in the eyes."

Inquisitions

NIGHTMARES AND DAYDREAMS

by Nelson Bond

Arkham House: Publishers, Sauk
City, Wisconsin 53583; 1968; 269pp;
\$5.00.

Contents: *To People a New World; A Rosy Future for Roderick; The Song; Petersen's Eye; The Abduction of Abner Greer; Bird of Prey; The Spinsters; The Devil to Pay; "Down Will Come the Sky; The Pet Shop; Al Haddon's Lamp; Last Innings; The Dark Door; Much Ado About Fending; Final Report.*

Nelson Bond still has quite a following among lovers of fantasy and science fiction, despite the fact that little if any new material seems to have come from his typewriter in recent years. There is a smooth facility to his style, an easy-going manner that is rarely strained, and an uncanny knack for selecting precisely the sort of situations and development of them that will have instant appeal to the general reader—nothing esoteric. So for those who enjoyed this author's stories in the past, and would like to re-read them, or catch some that were missed at the time of publication, Arkham House has done a good deed.

If you have sensed from the above that the reviewer is not among the enthusiastic Bond fans, you were

right; but it wasn't until I read this collection that I could tell you why I stopped reading that author some twenty years ago. It is not that I consider him worthless for my tastes; on the contrary, a number of the stories in this book seemed to me to be very effective, and I'd put *Bird of Prey* at the top.

It's that I found the qualities listed in the first paragraph more of a liability than an asset; so that what we have here, for the most part, is very cleverly contrived stories, expertly designed to catch people who have very little imagination. They are nearly all essentially "slick" stories, meaning that nearly all present comfortable second-hand sentiments, thoughts, and emotions in an entertaining and colorful manner; even the unpleasant ones are unpleasant in a comfortable way which presents no real problems to the consciousness of the old-time faithful reader of the *Saturday Evening Post*, etc. The comparison that keeps coming to my mind is the slick, clever, entertaining, and mostly empty symphonies of Dmitri Shostakovich. If they really hit you, as these Bond stories obviously hit many readers, then you can listen and listen. Otherwise, you may want to hear them once in a while—they're well-made—but not more than one at a listening time or listening cycle.

So for the Bond fans, I say rejoice: here's what you've been waiting

for; to others, I say beware: better not read more than one at a time, and don't rush to get back to the next one. That's the best way to give the author a fair shake (as I myself could not, having to read as continuously as possible), and there's no question in my mind but that he's earned it. I've listened to youngsters talk about him (and some of them elder youngsters) and seen how their eyes light up when the name "Nelson Bond" is mentioned. Any author who has given that much peaceful pleasure to so many people has earned far more than any publisher could pay him.

Arkham House, in doing good, has done well as usual in production details. RAWL

INDEX TO THE WEIRD FICTION MAGAZINES (Index by Author)

T. G. L. Cockroft, Lower Hutt, New Zealand; 1967; 63/4" x 93/4"; pages 57-100; \$2.75.

This is a new edition of the second volume of Cockroft's Index, covering *WEIRD TALES*, *STRANGE STORIES*, *STRANGE TALES*, *THE THRILL BOOK*, *ORIENTAL STORIES*, *THE MAGIC CARPET MAGAZINE*, *STRANGE TALES* (British); and *GOLDEN FLEECE*. It contains various addenda and some corrections to the first edition but not so much that I would say you really need it if you have the first edition. However, you well may want it, and it is worth having on its own terms; certainly if you have not yet obtained the Index, then this is the edition of volume two to get. Whether a new edition of volume one (Index by

Title) will be forthcoming, I cannot say; I can only note that some corrections of mis-types in the Index by Title are listed on page 58 of this new edition of the Index by Author.

H. P. LOVECRAFT A portrait
by W. Paul Cook

The Anthem Series, 5111 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21207; 1968; limited edition of 500 copies in quarto size paperback; 66pp; \$2.50.

This appeared in Arkham House's second collection of the writings of H. P. Lovecraft, along with appreciations, etc., *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (1943) under the title "An Appreciation of Lovecraft"; it is one of the few items in this volume which Arkham House has not reprinted since. Having re-read it in that volume, with the aid of a magnifying glass, about a year ago, I greatly appreciate its availability in this neatly-printed paperback which I can read easily without extra magnification. Jack L. Chalker has a three-page introduction, "Notes on W. Paul Cook"; Cook, who died in 1948, was the man who introduced Lovecraft to the National Amateur Press Association. HPL published his own magazine, *The Conservative*, for the organization, and a number of his short stories appeared for the first time in some of these "apazines". It was also through NAPA that Lovecraft first became acquainted with the writings of Clark Ashton Smith, and life-long friendship was formed between them.

Collectors of Lovecraftiana who do not own this essay won't want to miss

It; it's an informal memoir which adds up to a most interesting profile, warts and all, written entertainingly and with affection.

AMATEUR PERIODICALS

Unfortunately, there is hardly any chance of a "review" of any regularly published fan magazine while the issue at hand is still current. The titles selected are those which I find to have maintained a good standard of excellence and interest over a number of issues, so that even if the one described here can no longer be obtained (fan magazines have small printings, and the good ones often go out of print within a year at the most), there's a sporting chance that the current one will display similar characteristics. Here are three which qualify.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, Richard E. Gels, P. O. Box 3116, Santa Monica, California, 90403. #28, quarto size; 64pp, offset, with neat type and clearly reproduced artwork; 50c. This is supposed to appear bi-monthly, and has indeed done so for over six issues; subscriptions \$3.00 per year.

When a man is willing to get up in public and expose his deepest thoughts and feelings in an intelligent and reasoned manner, risking being called a damn fool or worse, then it makes no difference to me whether I consider his final conclusions and/or decisions folly: I respect him, and say that he has earned the right to be heard as clearly as possible. Phillip J. Farmer's Baycon speech, *Recap*, was not (I am told; I wasn't there) heard clearly by all attending

the banquet, where Farmer was the Convention's Guest of Honor. Some were unable to hear, due to the acoustics of the room; others, due to the superlative atmosphere in the room, found themselves going to sleep even though they could hear the speaker and found his talk interesting.

A rather poorly mimeographed transcript of the speech was included in a mailing of the Science Fiction Writers of America, for members only. This is the first decent printing of the speech that has come out, and Gels is to be congratulated for making it available in readable form. Incidentally, the current issue of Gels's magazine, November 1968, is the first with title "Science Fiction Review"; the first 27 issues were titled *PSYCHOTIC*, and I'd say Brother Gels made the switch just in time.

For the rest, this issue follows the magazine's policy of presenting controversial articles on all aspects of fantasy and science fiction, both from the viewpoints of fans and professional writers. The expression is not what you would call greatly inhibited, and the letter section frequently becomes erudite; SFR is rarely dull and you will find any number of well known authors in its pages.

SPECULATION, Peter R. Weston, 81 Treacott Road, Northfield, Birmingham 31, England. Issue #19 is letter size, neatly reproduced in readable type, 64 pages. It is published irregularly, and is available to Americans at 35c the copy or 3 for \$1.00; Mr. Weston asks U. S. readers to remit in currency, directly to the editor, not checks. (British banks take a whopping toll when they clear an American check.)

This is a critical magazine, presenting reviews at length of recent or fairly recent books. Issue #19 has comments on *A Torrent of Faces* (Blish/Knight), *Bug Jack Barron* (Spährad), *Neutron Star* (Niven), and *Heinlein in Dimension* (Pan-shin), along with additional comments by authors or editors involved, at times. The feature in this issue is a long discussion and evaluation of the writings of Brian Aldiss; and in a special column of his own, Michael Moorcock relates the fantastic history of his editorship of the British science fiction magazine, *NEW WORLDS*.

The chances may be better for obtaining a copy of this issue than that of an American publication listed here. I'd recommend trying an issue if the description above interests you; after that, you're on your own.

LOCUS, Charlie & Marsha Brown, 2078 Anthony Avenue, Bronx, New York 10457. This is published bi-weekly, generally runs to six clearly mimeographed pages, letter size, and subscriptions are 8 for \$1; 12 for \$2; or 18 for \$3.

A news sheet appearing every other week, running all manner of notices about conventions, con-

ferences, gatherings; publications; listing of events of particular interest to science fictionists outside of the "fan" orbits; brief reports of meetings, etc.; listing fans' latest changes of address; fan publications; sometimes contents of forthcoming issues of the regular magazines, etc., etc., etc., is something which I find valuable. Persons not involved may or may not find it interesting. The range is so wide that here and there an issue may be filled with material about activities you're not interested in, but if you find the sort of news which appears here interesting in general, then this is very good publication for your list.

Issue # 16, just arrived today (January 8, 1969) contains items about the Tolkien fans, the Modern Language Association (which has recently been calling upon science fiction professionals to speak or participate in panel discussions), the final financial situation with the Baycon (healthy), brief fanzine reviews, and a number of other heterogeneous items. There's no telling what sort of material I'll find in the next issue—that's part of the fun—but there'll be something of interest for me.

It Is Written

Generally speaking, the polls have two months to go when copy for a new issue is first typed up for the printer, for this takes place about six weeks after the issue in question is supposed to appear on sale. However, the bulk of the comments from you, the readers, comes in during these first six weeks, as a rule. There are always exceptions, of course; still it is fairly safe to assume that something better than half of the votes that are going to reach me on time have, in fact, arrived.

Therefore, when one story has a two-lengths plus lead (meaning, that two ballots rating this story "X", and the nearest story to it "O", plus another ballot putting the lead several points lower than the nearest story will be needed to upset the trend—or a long process of attrition, whereby another story gradually creeps up) it's a reasonable, even though not a certain, thing to project this as the final outcome.

The first few ballots usually do not indicate too much, but by the time a dozen have been scored, we can begin to get an idea of the general trend. If one story has taken the lead and held it thus far, that's one indicator—even though it has happened that such a story continued the lead just about up to the final ballot received before closing time, and then lost by a nose! If another story seems to have fallen into the second slot, that's another indicator; of

course, it's most interesting when no indication can be seen clearly enough for me to make a guess during the first six weeks.

Your ballots, however, clearly suggest that following the requests to reprint *The Devil's Bride* and to run Dr. Keller's charming "Cornwall" series may have been a good decision. We won't know on the first, of course, until your responses to the second and the third (present and final) installments come in; and with the Keller series, there are a number of further stories to run—in fact, we're just really getting in to it now, as the next story will be one which appeared in magazines before, the first three being brand new to publication.

L. Sprague de Camp writes: "To answer Mr. Blanco's query (MOH, No. 26, p. 120): I arrived at that opinion about 'ephemeral trash' after reading, a few years ago, through a nearly complete file of WTs for the 1928-1940 period, which I had obtained at considerable cost through second-hand SF dealers, in searching for stories to anthologize. Wright did print a great many stories of a very standardized, predictable type of creepy-crawly, almost any one of which could have been retitled *The Thing in my Coffin*. I should guess that lack of money rather than lack of taste explains most of these choices. I admit that such judgments

are strongly subjective; if Mr. Bianco finds excellence in those tales, bully for him. Kaor."

Having read the entire run of *WEIRD TALES* from April 1925 to May 1940 not just once, but in some instances several times, and still rereading them as I go along, I can say I generally agree with Sprague. Only there's another title that can fit a discouragingly large number of the stories: *Oh Dear God, No! I'm Dead!*

And it's true that even this agreement is strongly subjective.

Nonetheless, you know, that period of time covers an awful large number of stories; even discounting those which cause in me the effect of feeling "this is trash", there are many, many which—after how many re-readings?—still cause in me the effect of feeling, "this is fun to read" and sometimes, "this is really a first class story". In either event, I then take the chance, by running it in *MOH* or *SMS* as soon as possible, that a reasonable percentage of the readers will find that the story has a similar effect upon them. Even Sprague may enjoy one now and then—although I'm sure that I must have run some, and that if I keep going I shall surely run more, which he considers ephemeral trash.

I rather like his use of the adjective "ephemeral", too. There are some stories which I subjectively consider, really, pretty trashy—yet for reasons not always consciously known to me, I enjoy reading them. So whatever species of trash they may be to me, they are not "ephemeral", simply because they have produced a repeatable sense of enjoyment in me. The "ephemeral"

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ones are the ones which struck me as worthless the first time.

From all that I've read and heard, financial difficulties can certainly account for a large percentage of the stories in WT which most of us would agree were not worth printing even once. I doubt that Mr. Wright was happy over what he considered the necessity. But here's something I've noticed through the experience of writing and editing: when an editor is forced to take what he considers inferior material against his desires—which may be lack of money to buy anything better, orders from a publisher, or a nagging feeling that he must run some "junk" in order to get wider circulation—he often selects much more brutal rubbish than may be really necessary for his purposes; he tends to over-react to his own feelings of repulsion at what he feels he must do, and to his own feelings of revulsion at what he considers the "inferior" tastes that have to be catered to. And when this happens, it may happen, too, that in the end he will antagonize his faithful read-

ers without really obtaining the readers he hopes to attract through lowered standards. Whether this actually happened in Mr. Wright's case, I cannot say with any certainty; but I do suspect that there were times when something like what I've just described above did happen.

I've seen it happen with writers who felt that they had to "write down" and resented it. What they turned out was written so far down that the editors of the lowly publications to whom they were trying to play the harlot were appalled; while other writers who took the attitude, "Let's see how well we can work within these limitations", often turned out stories which fitted the requirements of the particular market and were really very good stories within these limitations. In some instances, these stories transcended policy restrictions without being beyond the tastes of the projected readers, in general.

Bruce McMahon, of Wallingford, Vermont, has a question which some

Preston—the warped but brilliant man who was behind the darkness on Fifth Avenue—was still alive; and his price for sparing New York was the assassination of Lt. Hines and Dr. Schaaf, the two who had beaten him earlier.

don't miss this unusual novelet

THE CITY OF THE BLIND

by Murray Leinster

in the spring (#12) issue of

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As you will see in going through the list of back issues, three are out of print; and we are very low on #13, a few extra copies of which were uncovered recently; but when they are gone, that will be it. Due to increased postal rates and other costs, we are forced to raise the price of back issues to 60c each, with a minimum order of two issues at \$1.20—postpaid, of course. If you want just *one* issue, then we'll have to charge you 75c.

#1, August 1963: Out of print.

#2, November 1963: *The Space-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *The Patient Thing*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Red Room*, H.G. Wells; *Hungary's Female Vampire* (article), Dean Lipton; *A Tough Fiasco*, Ambrose Bierce; *Doorslammer*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Electric Chair*, George Waight; *The Other One*, Jerry L. Kense; *The Character*, Archie Rinn; *Clinton*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Strange Ride of Mausie*, Rube Kipling.

#3, February 1964: Out of print.

#4, May 1964: Out of print.

#5, September 1964: *Cassius*, Henry S. Whithead; *Love at First Sight*, J. L. Miller; *Five Yea: Contrast*, by J. Vernon Shaw; *The House of the Worms*, Marie Perout; *The Beautiful Fall*, H.G. Wells; *A Stranger Came to Camp*, Stephen Deming; *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing*, Wally Liebocher; *Bones*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Ghostly Reveal*, Henry James.

#6, November 1964: *Centers of Horror*, Laurence Manning; *Prodigy*, Wally Liebocher; *The Monk*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Life After-Death of Mr. Theodorus Ward*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Feminine Function*, David Grinnell; *Dr. Herdigger's Experiment*, Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Power*, August Derleth; *The Monk*, H. G. Wells; *The Door to Sahara*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#7, January 1965: *The Thing from—Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Oblong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way with Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E.B. Marrison—Watson; *The Shattered Room*, H.P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

#8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R.H.D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Passer*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Cellar*, Washington Irving; *Jock*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings.

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one of you might be able to answer: " . . . A few years ago I read a story and enjoyed it greatly, but haven't seen it since, and I can't remember the title. It had to do with a man and a woman adrift in a rowboat, and landing on an island where the vegetation was a gray moss type of growth. I remember, I think, that they ate some and turned into the substance. That is a very vague description, but by any chance do you know the title, and if I might get it in a paperback collection or anthology?"

Unfortunately, the story is over-familiar to me; I've read it so many different ways, I can't sort out the titles offhand; and it's entirely possible that I did not read this particular specimen. Can anyone help?

Charles Hildy writes from Harrisburg, Penna.: "What a pleasure to come upon something like *Cliffs That Laughed*—it had the 'sound' of a Barok quartet and a fresh, new quality that used to be called 'off-trail' if my memory banks serve. And *The White Dog* might well have been culled from some babushka's chimney-corner anthology, but since you give no scoop on Solagub, I must assume that he's a contemporary and not an anthologist of 19th century Slavic folk tales.

"Such a coup to have garnered *Tales From Cornwall*! Even though the first yarn wasn't particularly smashing, I do look forward to the promised stories, because I did so enjoy those printed in WT in the long ago. (Why have you deprived your readers of *The Doorbell*?) *The Milk Carts* is still another example in an issue devoted to 'fireside

stories', although a milder one, to be sure. Only *The Devil's Bride* seemed to stand apart from this general aura of the winter's tale kind of peasant's pastime. Hey, maybe you meant them for Christmas reading—the sort of thing the British print in December issues of their magazines. Good idea."

The White Dog may have appeared in various anthologies, etc., but my source for it was the February 1926 issue of *WEIRD TALES*, where it appeared as a reprint. I have not seen anything further about it, but assume that "Sologub", who T. G. L. Cockcroft tells me was a pseudonym for Fedor Kuzmich Teternikov, wrote it in the 19th century. This is no more than a guess, however.

The Doorbell is on my list; one reason for not rushing to push it, however, is that the last I heard, the Arkham House collection (which includes it), *Tales From Underwood*, was still in print. Not that "in print in Arkham House" material is automatically barred, since Mr. Derleth indicated to me how small those editions really are, but that where I have a choice among various stories by an author that seems worthy to me, I prefer to select out-of-print ones first. And sometimes I am betrayed by the event of its availability in a soft cover collection I did not know of, or which came out after I had the story in question set up in type.

Delighted to hear you found the March issue in general a Good Thing. It wasn't planned exactly the way it came out, though; I'd hoped to get one novelet in, which would not have left the "Christmas issue" impression you received.

Have You Missed These Issues?

#9, June 1963: *The Night Wire*, H.F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, William West; *All the Sins of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Shells in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Pegg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H.G. Wells; *The Three Low Muses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

#10, August 1963: *The Christ Haddon's*, Pauline Kappel Priluck; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Senbury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placido's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come Closer*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1963: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Mech-Man*, Laurence Manning; *Was it a Dream*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Hawth Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Du Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dweller in Dark Valley* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Foot*, Greye la Sptin.

#12, Winter 1963/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Senbury Quinn; *But not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Munching*, Everett; *Gordon MacCraigh*, *The Affair at 7 Rue de St. John Steinbeck*; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A.W. Lowndes; *Destimation* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL* (article), Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead.

Have You Missed These Issues?

#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scott; *Devine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Horridly*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anne Hanger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Lair of Star-Spawn*, Derleth & Schover; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now The Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Muth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel Defoe; *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster God of Mewarth*, Edmond Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Barker; *Litton*, Robert A. W. Lowden; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr; *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Levit; *Lazarus*, Leonid Andreyev; *Mr. Oatler*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog That Laughed*, Charles Willard Duffin; *AA*, Sweet Youth, Pauline Kappel Priback; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Lafferty; *The London Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#17, Fall 1967: *A Sense of Crawling*, Robert Edmond Alter; *The Laughing Duke*, Wallace West; *Drum's Buir*, Robert E. Howard; *The Spell of the Sword*, Frank Aubrey; "Williamus", Henry S. Whitehead; *The Curse Of Amen-Ra*, Victor Riosmanal.

T. S. Dillay, writes from Gainesville, Florida, to disagree with one of the editor's comments: "Disagree with you (page 120, March MOH) THAT McIlraith lopped off the extreme of awfulness from Wright editorship of WT. *The Monkey Ship*, (March 1952 WT) is so far the worst thing by a long shot I've seen in 160 issues of WT. The excellence of the Wright editorship she may have lopped."

Well, since I have read that 1952 issue of *WEIRD TALES*, I have read *The Monkey Ship*. Perhaps it was indeed the absolute worst, and so unhearsably awful that I cannot remember it. You inspire me to dig out the issue and try re-reading it! Generally speaking though, while I did indeed consider a fair amount of the contents of the McIlraith WT rather poor, particularly during the first few years, my general impression is that it was rare that a story there struck me as being quite as bad as many in the Wright issues, particularly during his first few years. I did get the impression of gradual improvement, while Wright was running what seemed to me to be execrable material (along with excellent stuff) up to the very end of his tenure. But this is all very subjective, so the most we could obtain from discussing it is agreement on a few specific items--and perhaps a list with which a few other oldtime readers would agree.

After some twenty eight years of struggle to get and print what I subjectively considered good to excellent stories, consistently, in a publication which showed steady improvement as both my taste and

Coming Next Issue

I rode beside Guatemozin, and I studied him as we rode. He trembled when the car jerked into motion; but his face became motionless on the instant, and he was as indifferent to our conveyance from that moment on as I was myself. It was a proud indifference, the haughty disdain of a prince of the blood.

But as we approached the city I saw his eyes roam this way and that, drinking in detail after detail. When we finally swung into Paseo de la Reforma, with its western extremity in the very shadow of Chapultepec, I read, deeply hidden underneath the stony expression, something so appalling that a weird terror came to grasp me by the throat with invisible fingers.

For that which I read in the face of Guatemozin was fear!

But mad as the man evidently was, there was greatness in him of a sort. His head lifted proudly after a moment, his eyes were mere slits beside his slender nose, whose nostrils quivered like those of a frightened thorough-bred horse; but which refuses to bolt because it is a thorough-bred.

And something struck me with the force of a blow. Guatemozin, whom I had found at the very edge of the city, had never before entered it. He had never seen an automobile, or men who dressed as those Mexicans and myself were dressed. Whence then, in God's name, had he come? There had been a certain eagerness in his face as we approached the city, and an ejaculation in a strange tongue burst from his lips when he saw the summer palace of the president at the crest of Chapultepec. And I realized that he knew Chapultepec; but had never seen the palace, nor any of the buildings at the crest of the monolith—and some of them had been built before this man had been born!

It was a puzzle. My mind went back to my meeting with Guatemozin—at the lip of the cliff. One moment I had been the only human being anywhere near. The next, I had looked back, to see Guatemozin, in all his silky finery, peering steadfastly into the dying sun—as though he had just come out of the bowels of the earth.

you won't want to miss this bizarre complete novelet

GAUTEMOZIN, THE VISITANT

by Arthur J. Burks

#18, November 1967: *In Amundsen's Tent*, John Martin Leahy; *Transient and Immortal*, Jim Haught; *Out of the Deep*, Robert E. Howard; *The Bibliophile*, Thomas Boyd; *The Ultimate Creature*, R. A. Lafferty; *Waters of Darkness*, Jack Williamson.

#19, January 1968: *The Red Witch*, Nicotia Dyalthe; *The Last Letter From Norman Underwood*, Larry Eugene Merrell; *The Journals of Vithos*, Harriet Bennett; *The Man From Cincinnati*, Holloway Horn; *Ground After*, Anna Hunger; *The Wind In The Rose-Bush*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Last of Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *The Yarns are as a Knife*, (verse) Robert E. Howard.

#20, March 1968: *The Siren of the Snakes*, Arlon Eadie; *The Rack*, G. G. Ketchum; *A Cry From Beyond*, Victor Rousseau; *Only Gone Before*, Emil Petaja; *The Voice*, Nell Kay; *The Monsters*, Murray Leinster.

#21, May 1968: *Kings of the Night*, Robert E. Howard; *The Counting of Prisoner Rogoff*, David A. English; *The Brim-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *A Psychological Invasion* (part one), Algernon Blackwood; *Nashville*, Col. S. F. Meek; *The Dark Star*, G. G. Pendarves.

#22, July 1968: *Worms of the Earth*, Robert E. Howard; *Coma*, Anna Hunger; *They Called Him Ghost*, Lawrence J. Cahill; *The Phantom 'Rickshaw*, Rudyard Kipling; *The Castle in the Window*, Sullivan B. Allett; *A Psychological Invasion*, (part two), Algernon Blackwood.

writers' submissions improved, I feel much more sympathetic to Miles McIlraith than I did back in the 40s. I do not now get the feeling that she felt she had to cater to low tastes, after the first few years (we mustn't forget Launcelot Biggs, etc.!) And I do get the feeling that she not only rejected a lot of rubbish that Wright would have felt he needed to print but accepted a lot of rather good material which he would have felt he could not afford to take—because HPL, CAS, etc., supplied him with all the "good" material that his public would accept.

Henry R. Sobieski writes from Detroit: "I am sorry to say that issue #26 of MOH is the poorest storywise that I have read. Part One of *The Devil's Bride* won first place, far ahead of the others, not that it is that great but that the others were so poor in my opinion. Mr. Finlay's cover is once again a very good one, three out of four is pretty good.

"I am looking forward to issue #27 of MOH, with part two of *Devil's Bride*, and if the story, *Spawn of Inferno*, by Mr. High B. Cave, lives up to its promise, it should be a very good issue."

Needless to say, I regret disappointing even one reader. Or to add that upon reading Friend Hidley's letter (which was the first to arrive in relation to the March issue), I was almost certain that I would hear from at least one reader who was as disappointed as Hidley was delighted. That is the way of a world wherein we are all different.

Richard Grose writes from Dowagiac, Mich.: "Clark Ashton Smith



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#23, September 1968: *The Abyss* (part one), David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Death Mask*, Mrs. H. D. Everett; *One By One*, Richard M. Hodgson; *The Thirtieth Floor*, Douglas M. Dold; *Leopards*, Robert A. W. Lowden.

#24, November 1968: *Once in a Thousand Years*, Frances Bragg Middleton; *The Eye of Horus*, Steffan B. Aleni; *4 Frost Poems: Memory, What the Moon Brings, Nyctistothep, Ex Oblivione*, H.P. Lovecraft; *A Diagnosis of Death*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Abyss* (part two), David H. Keller, M.D.

#25, January 1969: *There Shall Be No Darkness*, James Blisk; *The Phantom Ship*, Captain Frederick Marryat; *When Dead Gods Wake*, Victor Rousseau; *The Writings of Elwin Adams*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Colossus of Yourgne*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#27, March 1969: *The Devil's Bride* (part one), Seabury Quinn; *The Oak Tree*, David H. Keller, M. D.; *The Milk Cart*, Violet A. Mathley; *Cliffs That Laughed*, R. A. Lafferty; *Flight*, James W. Bennet & Soong Kwen-Ling; *The White Dog*, Feodor Sologub.

#28, May 1969: *Spawn of Inferno*, Hugh B. Cave; *The Sword and the Eagle*, David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Horror out of Lovecraft*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Last Work of Pietro of Apono*, Steffan B. Aleni; *At the End of Days*, Robert Silverberg; *The Devil's Bride* (part two), Seabury Quinn.

has always disappointed me as an artist. His illustration for *The Colossus of Yourgne* was not very good. On the other hand, his sculpture amply demonstrates he was a genius in more than one medium. CAS was a master of satire. His use of humor and the erotic are two of the ways he stands somewhat apart from HPL. It is interesting that HPL avoided the overtly sexual like the plague. He was no doubt phobic in this area. His explanation that he avoided the erotic on aesthetic grounds strikes me as a rationalization. Also, while reading Robert E. Howard, I've noted an absence of the sexual, although the overtly aggressive certainly abounds in Howard.

"All this is apropos of nothing except to say some fantasy writers had hangups in the same area. Along this same line, I once showed a psychologist friend of mine my collection of Hannu Bok's work. Among other things, he found them 'asexual yet sexy', whatever that means? . . .

"The best story in the March MOH is *Flight*. I found nothing horrific in it and yet it had a 'gentle' quality that will stick in my memory long after the 'blood and thunder' epics have faded. Here we have a supernatural story that does not rely on horror to gain its impact, and yet I feel the impact is certainly there. This is a rare quality in a supernatural story.

"*The Devil's Bride* is the best de Grandin story I've read. Rating "1". It succeeds despite the presence of 'the little Frenchman' and not because of it. I've tried to analyze my irritation with de Grandin and have come up with this: He is a bragging egotist who is one-dimen-

sional and absurd. He is a comic version of Poe's C. Auguste Dupin. He too often appears in plots that smack of melodrama and low grade hack writing.

"I am well aware that Mr. Quinn wrote the de Grandin stories as entertainment, and thus they cannot be judged as works of classic literature. I am also aware that melodrama and 'stories written not be taken seriously' are popular due to their 'camp' value. Yet, taking all this into consideration (including my hostility for 'camp', 'campers' and all that means) I can only conclude that my ambivalence to de Grandin is due to the stories being so highly praised when they are not of high quality. This is as compared to the other detective genre series I'm familiar with (occult or not). I note that several de Grandin yarns feature mutilations of 'pretty young things' and thus wonder if they would fall into the category of the 'sex and sadism' pulps of the 30s."

Perhaps the editor is hopelessly square, but he cannot see anything to get pleasurably excited over in either Clark Aston Smith's sculpture or his published illustrations. And I may sound squarer still when I say that the main impression I get from the illustrations is that CAS couldn't draw—an impression I do not get from the sometimes crude-seeming work of Picasso.

There is indeed an element of 'sex and sadism' in some of the Quinn stories (and this is not confined to the de Grandin tales), but my impression is that this element is not be principal reason for the stories having been written at all—while the "sex and sadism" pulps of the

middle 30s and on to the 40s had little other reason for existence.

Somehow, those three words by your psychologist friend anent the drawings of Hannes Bok strike a responsive chord in me; I have the feeling that I know what he's talking about and that I agree with him—but it would take hundreds of words to explain—thousands, perhaps.

A reader writes on an unsigned preference page: "I really liked *The Devil's Bride*—somehow it captures a little of Sherlock Holmes and some of Agatha Christie's M. Poirot. But it is still SF or fantasy, whichever you choose.

"*The Milk Carts* almost didn't have to be written. I knew from the first page on exactly what was going to happen, and why.

"*Flight*—more, more more Hinduism, Taoism, Zen Bud., etc. All are deep and much can be done here in science fiction and fantasy. If you have any more in this vein, publish them. I'm also interested in astrology. Any tales in that line?"

I haven't seen much along the lines you ask for that (a) is available to me (b) seems to be good enough to be worth trying to obtain. But I haven't stopped looking; for even though not many readers may want to read many stories of such nature, an occasional one will give us desirable variety. It has nothing to do with intellectual agreement with a story's premises, either. While I'm in no danger whatsoever of being beatified, I am nonetheless approaching a blessed state: that of being able to enjoy a story containing material with which I disagree intensely. RAWL

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